MEMOIRS OF LEON DAUDET

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EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY
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This translation presents a selection from Léon Daudet's "Souvenirs des Milieux Littéraires, Politiques, Artistiques et Médicaux," published in six volumes at intervals between 1913 and 1922. It embodies such of the author's recollections as seem likely to interest American and English readers. Those who have a special interest in the period covered—roughly that of the Third Republic—should consult the original.

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CHAPTER I

Some Great Men of the 80's—Glimpses of Renan and Gambetta—Victor Hugo at Home—Portrait of Catulle Mendès—Théodore de Banville and His Wife—Henri Rochefort—Clemenceau Forty Years Ago—The Publisher, Gustave Charpentier, and His Circle—Massenet's Lollypops—Maupassant and Flaubert—Edmond de Goncourt—Zola in Paris and Médan.

IT should not be a difficult task to find, among the commencement records of the Lycée Louis-le-Grand, a copy of the speech delivered by Ernest Renan about the year 1880, in which he referred slightingly to the dry, colourless little flower we call the *immortelle*. The author of the "Life of Jesus" addressed the youngsters in a clear, kindly voice, his eyes half-closed in his broad face. His visage was, for all the world, like that of an elephant who has lost his trunk. My father sat beside him on the platform. I stepped forward to receive my prizes, and the old "Doubting Thomas" pressed his skinny cheek to mine, saying as he did so: "We'll do something for you one of these days."

About the same time Léon Gambetta dined at our house in the avenue de l'Observatoire. He was as big around as a table set for twelve, and as red in the face as a man who has just swallowed a flag the wrong way. When told that I was doing well at school, he gave me a long, proconsular embrace, and announced: "We'll do something for you one of these days. The Republic is a friend to all workers."

That precious Republic of pompous and bloated orators has since shown what kind of friend she is to the workers. But neither Renan nor Gambetta had the opportunity of keeping his promise to me. The pettiness and irresponsibility of parliamentary circles made me the sworn enemy of popular government, and patriotism and the genius of Maurras completed my conversion to the Royalist faith. How fortunate are the young men of to-day who, at eighteen, can read Maurras' "Enquête sur la Monarchie" and his "Kiel et Tanger," thus starting on their intellectual and political careers free from the stupid errors and cloudy fallacies which beset us thirty years ago!

These errors and fallacies were all about us. They were to be found in the conversation of the people we met, in the general atmosphere in which we lived, in the education which we received. Though my father's family were fervent Royalists, he himself did not consider the re-establishment of the Monarchy to be possible. At the close of the disastrous campaigns of 1870-71, his ardent patriotism led him to believe that the newly founded Republic would be capable of winning the next war against Germany. As time went on, he came to think differently, and the change in his opinions is reflected in his later novels. But at this time, in the days when he wrote "Les Rois en Exile," he was still a victim of the illusions of the time, and looked on the Monarchy as on some vast and imposing but obsolete piece of machinery.

I had as school-mates, both at the Lycée Charlemagne and at Louis-le-Grand, the sons of prominent Imperialists, who still defended the cause of the Bonapartes, even in the face of our recent bloody defeats. But a Royalist was an entirely unknown creature, one whom we would have regarded as a freak. Such people as did not share the prevalent enthusiasm for the Constitution of 1875, we grouped together in our minds and labelled reactionaries. This was the name we applied, though in a very friendly way, to Gustav Droz, author of "Monsieur, Madame et Bébé" and "Autour d'une Source." Droz already detested the Republic and those who battened upon it. I remember that I used to wonder how so intelligent a man could be so backward in his political ideas!

Those were the days when Paul Déroulède organized his rifle contests at Vincennes. I was taken to them by my father's secretary, Jules Ebner, who was a true patriot but utterly blind where the Republic was concerned. Déroulède was another of the people who made me that little speech: "We'll do something for you one of these days."

* * *

I was brought up to respect—or, rather, to reverence—Victor Hugo. My grandparents on my mother's side were both poets, both romantics, both Republicans of the school of 1848. They knew by heart "Les Châtiments," "La Légende des Siècles," and long passages from "Les Misérables." They would have turned out of the house anyone who dared make fun of the "Histoire d'un Crime." My father and mother felt the same way. The first time they took me to sit at the feet of the Grand Old Man in his musty house in the avenue d'Eylau, with its forlorn little garden, I was deeply moved by the sight of the venerable sage with his short, square figure, blue eyes and white beard. It was on that day I heard him utter distinctly the words, "The earth is calling me." They seemed to me filled with a mysterious meaning. He laid on my head his beautifully shaped hand (it was adorned with a ring that reminded me of my confirmation) and added, "One must work, and love all those who work." There was something genuinely fine and noble, and at the same time something vaguely ridiculous, in his attitude, and I receive the same mixed impression when I read his books. Perhaps it was due to his exaggerated sense of the importance of the part he played here on earth.

At that time Rodin was doing a bust of the Master. The sculptor used to take luncheon at the avenue d'Eylau. He was totally oblivious of everything except his mighty model. In those days, Rodin's work was still very much criticized, especially by the ignoramuses. Visitors would try to flatter Hugo by disparaging the splendid bust, declaring that it lacked the Olympian grandeur of the original. The sage, sunk in some profound or sensual dream (for to the end he remained in possession of all his faculties), neither approved, nor rebuked them. What he did do was to keep on eating voraciously with every one of his full complement of teeth, all still intact, in a manner that filled the onlooker with respect for the stomachs made in 1802. After meals he would play with his grandchildren, and show the tenderly affectionate side of his nature. It is unfortunate that Catulle Mendès took this tenderness as the subject for the second-rate poem he composed in honour of the Master's eightieth birthday. Catulle Mendès writing about any sincere feeling is like nothing so much as a slimy worm crawling over a sound piece of fruit.

Mendès was to be found constantly at the Hugos'. There, as elsewhere, he displayed a sham erudition and a make-believe vivaciousness. His whinnyings and caperings made him a notable bore. He always posed as being madly enthusiastic, tremendously stirred up about something or other. Anxious to maintain his own prominence in the literary world, he was in the habit of taking newcomers aside and explaining to them the art of Mallarmé, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, and Wagner. At intervals he would seize a chair and proclaim: "To me this piece of furniture is less real than a noble poem!" Then he would recite verses by Hugo, by Gautier or by Baudelaire. His quotations were generally excellent, but were spoiled by his diction, with its overemphasis and artificiality. In 1880 he had not yet become repulsive; old reprobate that he was, he still kept his looks; but already there floated about him that smell of ether and mucilage which made him so impossible in later years. When he was teased at Hugo's house for championing Wagner, he would "hedge," and thus give even his loyalties an appearance of insincerity.

Among other persons often to be seen at the avenue d'Eylau were Théodore de Banville and his wife. Dear old people! It is impossible to imagine a more tenderly united couple. Whoever has read Banville knows the man himself. His talk was as airy as an improvisation of Mercutio. Illumined constantly by the spark of his cigarette, his chat ranged wide and far, from the ravages of love to the finest recipes for cooking, touching incidentally on Balzac and the Théâtre Français. His words unlocked the doors of the dressing-rooms of famous actors, reported the epigrams of the reigning *boulevardiers*, drew a succession of word-pictures as clear and brilliant as the sketches of Fragonard. His anecdotes never dragged in the telling; a rapid tremulousness in his speech provided the element of suspense and did away with the need for details. Irony and kindliness alternated on his clean-shaven lips. Always exquisitely polite, he treated all women as though they were queens. He was actually willing to listen to other people's stories, a trait rarely found in *raconteurs* of his calibre. Hugo's genius intoxicated him. It had the effect of the perfume of some immense full-blown flower on the many-tinted butterfly. His wife was as clever as her husband, but more retiring. She possessed a wonderfully subtle tact. These two delightful people belonged to that little group whose loss makes us feel to the full the cruelty of death. How one longs to bring them back with pomp and circumstance from the shadowy shores!

But it was the professional politicians, Lockroy, Hugo's son-in-law, and his crowd, who were the real rulers in the poet's drawing room. They were hardly ever to be seen, but their presence was continually felt, and literature was made to serve their selfish ends. The skin of the lion was infested with these fleas. Needless to say, I did not realize this until much later. At that time the spell of popular government was still potent. At the mention of the Republic one thought at once of Gambetta striking an attitude, his arms extended, his mouth wide open, as we see him to-day outside the Louvre, while nearby hovered the ironic figure of Henri Rochefort, pen in hand.

It seemed as though Rochefort possessed the secret of eternal youth, so intense was his love of life. A total abstainer, so far as wine and tobacco were concerned, he indulged freely in all the other good things which life has to offer. The joy of conflict is one of these, and every night of Rochefort's long and adventurous career was, in one sense or another, a night of battle. Rochefort worshipped Hugo. The latter's poems, short or long, sublime or bad, formed the greater part of his follower's literary baggage. How his eyes would sparkle, under his historic little wig, at the mention of the poet's name! I can still hear his flat, but agreeable, voice relating some incident in which the flamboyant Triton of Guernsey, now come safe to shore, had played a part. He contributed greatly to Hugo's popularity with the masses. It was he who filled the ears of the readers of the penny papers with the poet's most celebrated imprecations, surrounding them with lighter remarks of his own which made them easier to assimilate. In his person, he typified that wholly verbal warfare which the "Histoire d'un Crime" and "Les Châtiments" waged against the Second Empire. He gave an added, more lofty, significance to the figure of Gavroche. A sense of irony, which Hugo lacked entirely, Rochefort placed at his service, and by so doing robbed the poet's enemies of their most deadly weapon. Thanks to him, the world did not realize sooner all the folly and absurdity concealed beneath the armour of the Romantics. I fancy the poet was conscious of the journalist's value. He petted and spoiled Rochefort as though he were a naughty child. Rochefort's tantrums were his constant amusement. Indeed, how could one help liking this "happy warrior," so quick to expose stupid vanity and selfishness, so decided in his likes and dislikes, so independent in his judgments of men and events? Rochefort loathed stupidity and cowardice, which explains why he attacked in succession the politicians of the Imperial, the Republican and the Socialist *régimes*, who were all alike in their instability, garrulity and disregard for the true interests of France. How he enjoyed ripping the stuffing out of such puppets—with their check books, their place seeking, their airs of importance! No wonder he was feared and hated. Not that he minded in the least being feared or hated. He—at any rate, so he said—had no skeleton in his cupboard, no murdered corpse tucked out of sight under the desk. An ardent patriot, but only a moderate believer in democracy, he despised people who were poorly educated. His other bugbears were every kind of profiteer, and the Jews, whom he hated both by instinct and intelligence. He avoided bores as he would avoid the plague. He loved fine paintings, women, and children. He perfectly typified his generation, which was lacking in any clear-cut standards, but crammed with revolutionary illusions. The latter, in the case of Rochefort, conflicted with his inherited instincts of respect for and loyalty to old customs and ways of thought. His anti-clericalism, much less marked in his later years, had about it the flavour of the eighteenth century. Believing his *flair* to be infallible, he never changed his opinion. You could prove to him by the hour that So-and-so, whom he excoriated, was not the utter scoundrel he made him out; in the end, Rochefort would say with a laugh, "Yes, yes, yes; he's just what I said he is, a hopeless bounder." What an obstinate, delightful old man he was! It is too bad that he failed to put into his memoirs the nerve and sinew of his talk. Doubtless, he took too much trouble in writing them, and, for once, failed to trust to his magnificent gift of improvisation. He was a good hater. His animosities lived lives of their own, like half-tamed animals drowsing in their cages but waking at times to make the welkin ring. He never forgot either good or ill, and when angry would snarl and sneeze sideways like a cat, or a tiger.

The majority of people whom one met in Hugo's drawing room were also constant visitors at a neighboring and equally hospitable house, that of the Dorian and Ménard-Dorian families. Here was to be found a most gracious and delightful hostess, who could never do enough for her guests. There was also her husband, retired but still intellectually alert, a perfect example of that southern Protestant stock which breeds shy but stiff-necked fanatics. An elderly lady, exquisitely refined, the wife of the Dorian who figured in the siege of Paris, and mother-in-law of Paul Ménard, and a whole tribe of young people, of whom I was one, shockingly spoiled but full of life and high spirits, alike helped to make of this household one of the oases in the general Republican desert. Everything was done here to help us have the best of good times. There was an endless succession of dinners and dances, supper parties, receptions and trips to the country places round about Paris. There was good music, too, at the Ménards' and, what is more, no obligation to listen to it. Writers, such as Daudet, Zola, the Goncourts, came in contact here with well-known painters and sculptors, among them Rodin, Carrière, and Rénouard, and politicians of various shades of opinion. The great center of interest, however, was the editor of the newspaper, "Justice," and the hope of the Radical Party, Georges Clemenceau.

It is not my intention to make of this book a political pamphlet. I wish it to show how people and things looked at the time, and I reserve the right to describe their subsequent evolution or degradation. I nothing extenuate, nor set down ought in malice, and these papers will have at least one merit in the reader's eyes, a faithful precision. I will therefore declare that, at the time of which I am now speaking, Clemenceau was by far the most interesting figure not only in his own party, but among all contemporary politicians.

He, at any rate, had a sense of humour. He told us how, one day, Antonin Proust, then holding office, came to see him about some shady financial transactions. Proust's explanations were laboured, and obviously fictitious. Clemenceau suddenly put a hand on his shoulder with the question, "How would you feel, my dear Antonin, if I were to send for the police?" "Ah, ah! brouff, brouff, oh, oh, hi, hou, brouff! You should have seen his noble countenance!" Indeed, Clemenceau was always indulging in ferocious remarks of this kind, delivered in a sharp, dry tone, as of one accustomed to bite cartridges. Always well groomed, he took the utmost care of the Chinese mask that serves him as a face. He was like one of those professional duellists with whom it is not wise to take liberties. We young people also liked him on account of his simplicity of manner. He never took advantage of his age or position, but was always ready to meet us on our own ground. One heard all sorts of stories about Clemenceau; how he had had more than one liaison at the Opera; how he went fishing with Herbert Spencer and several British admirals; how he never paid his contributors. The latter never seemed to mind this, but positively worshipped their chief. There was no doubt about it, Clemenceau had a way with him. All the opportunist clique feared and hated him, but, when he stood, hands in pockets, an ironic smile on his lips, watching his charming daughters dance the minuet, people would say, "What a very young-looking father! He might be taken for their elder brother." All this happened seven years before the explosion of the Panama scandal, before the sky of the young Republic became overcast.

Clemenceau in those days had a great deal to say in praise of a certain young general whom he had discovered and with whom he was "working." He described his protégé as intelligent, hard-working, and very democratic; his name was Boulanger. Already Clemenceau was fond of those expressions about "creative effort," "manual labour," "ruthlessness," which he has used so many times since. Delighting in his own wit, he was forever coining epigrams—some of them very successful, too—and was no respecter of things or persons. He sank his teeth in Jules Ferry's crowd, and gave them many an unhappy hour. Indeed, he has always had a profound contempt for human nature—probably on account of the specimen he sees in his mirror. But in those days he had not yet given way—at least, not publicly—to his anti-clerical mania, and his intelligence appeared too good for the pettiness of parliamentary bickering. His two most intimate friends were George Périn, always earnest, sometimes fastidious, and absolutely honourable in all his dealings, and Paul Ménard, the most powerful capitalist in France, next to the Schneiders. Ménard had been brought up to be a Protestant clergyman. He and Périn used to say, "Wait and see what will happen when Clemenceau comes into power. There'll be a big change." That day seemed a long way off; some thought it would never dawn.

When I remember Clemenceau as he was then, and compare him with the man he has since become, I feel that he, too, has fallen a victim to that democracy he has so thoroughly exploited. To-day he is nothing but a little, garrulous old man chattering outworn formulas, endlessly mouthing anti-Catholic platitudes which have lost their meaning.[1] Who would have predicted such an end for him in the days when great painters and men of letters considered him as an equal, when he was looked upon as the one statesman capable of understanding and appreciating the art of the Goncourts, of Huysmans and of Rodin?

The brightest of my memories of this time and this group, centering around the Dorians and the Ménards, concerns the occasion when Victor Hugo came to a reception at their house. His grandchildren were to dance, in all the radiance of their youth and the added glamour of their famous grandfather's fame. That evening there were assembled all the leading figures in the literary, artistic and political worlds. As the Master entered the drawing-room, the guests respectfully formed a double line on either side. His deep blue eyes were already filled with the serenity of the great beyond, but his step was firm as he advanced towards the charming and gracious hostess. Bowing, he kissed her hand, while an unseen orchestra played Saint-Saëns' "Hymne à Victor Hugo," and a shower of rose leaves floated down from the ceiling. It was a discreet apotheosis perfectly carried out. The poet, the companion and recorder of the nineteenth century's stormy course, who had watched it with a glance that sometimes magnified, sometimes caricatured men and events (and had sometimes remained implacable, as in "Choses Vues"), remained aloof from this celebration. To be sure, he did stop to say a few words to each of the guests, he did pat the children with his fine, parchment-like hand, but one felt that he dwelt above the earth, as though already wrapt by an immortality far other than that expressed in the official green palms of the Academy. He paid especial respects to Madame Edmond Adam, whose beauty, with its mingling of gentleness and clear-sightedness, exhaled a grave, sweet charm all its own. This was, I believe, one of the last times he left his house.

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[1] This was written in 1913. For a later estimate see page 276.

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My first memories connected with literature go back to the days when Turgenieff, Flaubert, and Edmond de Goncourt used to come to dine at our home in the due Pavée, in the Marais district. They were all three very tall, and I inquired anxiously, "Are those what they call giants?" Later I remember going with my father to Georges Charpentier's bookstore, on the Quai du Louvre. My father wished to find out how his new novel, "Fromont Jeune et Risler Aîné," was selling, and Charpentier reassured him with a characteristic, "It's going splendidly—more than splendidly, in fact. We are reprinting as fast as we can." Charpentier was the best, the kindest, the least commercially minded man in the world. His authors were his friends; he was thoroughly fair and generous. He knew how to enjoy a joke, at any time, and these qualities, together with his native shrewdness, which was that of the born Parisian, and the agreeable manner of his wife, made his house a gathering place for novelists and journalists, sculptors and painters, actors and etchers. Naturally, those writers who belonged to the so-called "Realist" group made Charpentier's house in the rue de Grenelle their headquarters, since it was he who published their principal works. Here one found none of that vulgarity so common in Bohemian circles, neither was there any constraint, although one was always conscious of being in good society, and everyone appeared to his best advantage. Among the most constant guests at the Charpentiers' were my father, Edmond de Goncourt, then just coming back into fashion, Zola, who was at the crest of his success, the contributors to the volume entitled "Les Soirées de Médan," Huysmans, Maupassant, Hennique, Céard, and Gustave Flaubert, emancipated for a few hours from his dismal existence at Croisset. These gatherings were particularly gay and animated. It was noticeable that any deputies or senators who happened to be present effaced themselves and adopted a most respectful attitude towards the writers and artists. Of course, everyone present was a supporter of the Republic. Conservatives of all kinds were considered a lot of old fogies, utterly negligible, and obsolete survivals of an earlier, less intelligent era. Moreover, they were known to be full of all sorts of absurd prejudices. Their only purpose in the world was to act as targets for the caricaturist and the satirist.

How amused we were at the mere mention of the name of some reactionary! All about us the established government asserted its power, and constantly gained new recruits. The very word "conservative" evoked the image of a bald old man with immense side whiskers, who read nothing, and knew nothing, and whose ambition was limited to the return of France to the superstitions of the Middle Ages. The Royalist Party and the King were never mentioned. Before I reached manhood I did not hear the name of the Comte de Chambord or the Comte de Paris twenty times. People referred more frequently to the Emperor, the Empress, and the Court of the Tuileries, usually in connection with our recent defeats. The supporters of the Empire, whether they defended it openly or plotted behind the scenes, were not taken seriously. In short, no government ever had the vital, active forces of a nation more completely at its disposal than did the Third Republic at the period of which I am now speaking.

It was about this time that Charpentier founded a magazine, called "La Vie Moderne," which was intended to record what the "impressionists," then just coming to the fore, were doing in the field of art. At the same time it was to publish new novels, short stories and essays by the principal authors connected with his firm. Charpentier chose Émile Bergerat, son-in-law of Théophile

Gautier, as editor of this magazine. It was short lived, but its contents are interesting. Bergerat was honest enough, but was forever meddling with other people's affairs. He scored a success with a series of articles in the "Figaro," signed "Caliban," but suffered numerous failures as a playwright, and indulged in interminable squabbles with various theatrical managers, especially Porel, who first accepted and then refused his plays.

Painting is, indeed, a curious art. Even more than in music, in painting, every innovation astonishes, displeases and irritates not only the public but the majority of amateurs, critics and professionals. A few years later the opposition subsides, and the works whose merits were disputed and disparaged are judged calmly, and are sometimes acknowledged to be masterpieces. Such was the case with Manet's "Olympia," Whistler's "Woman in White," the early canvases of Renoir, the first paintings by Monet and Sisley, the first drawings by Forain, Rodin's first busts. The human eye is disagreeably surprised by any modification of conventional lines, shapes or colours. Its reaction is a hostile one. People believe that the innovator (who is frequently a misjudged continuator) is making fun of them. Charpentier's group escaped the application of this general rule and later generations have ratified its judgments. Paintings despised then have become priceless to-day, and no Philistine dares confess to disliking Renoir, Monet or Rodin. Indeed, it has become difficult to understand the reasons for all the opposition they encountered. Among the painters of that day, Alfred Stevens was already recognized as a master. He was a great artist, sane and good-hearted. Extremely eloquent, he knew how to sum up the canons of his art in striking formulas. Surrounded by his handsome children, with a wife at his side who was in every respect her husband's comrade, Stevens presented a perfect picture of strength and well being. Gay, generous, loyal, he made a great deal of money, and he spent it with equal ease.

Henri Becque, the author of "La Parisienne," "Michel Pauper" and "Les Corbeaux," with his wide, good-humoured face and mouth always as moist as a freshly peeled peach, enjoyed a reputation as a cynic which he had to maintain at any cost. Of the epigrams attributed to him, only a few were authentic, and even those had been produced laboriously. Henri Céard, who knew Becque well, declared that hè was obliged to take off his coat to put an edge on his barbed witticisms. Becque's dislike for Dumas the younger, founded upon very slight grounds, caused him to admire Sardou, and this gives one an idea of his critical ability. Admittedly the plays of Dumas are old-fashioned; it is not pleasant to have to sit through the "Demi-Monde" or "Françillon," even if you have cotton stuffed in your ears, for the very look of these works has become grotesquely out of date. Nevertheless, their author deserves at least a place in the history of the stage, whereas Victorien Sardou manufactured goods strictly for export, with the exception of "Tosca" and "La Haine." His plays were intelligible in the Sandwich Islands, or in New York, or in Sydney. Foreigners would say, "Oh, Mr. Sardou—everyone understands what *he* means," while we French answered, "That's just the reason why we don't understand him in Paris any more." Becque was constantly attacking his fellow writers. In spite of this, however, his conversation was tiresome. He slandered, but remained a bore. He peddled his poisonous tittle tattle—and his hearers fled to the refreshment-room. Make the best of the fact. Perhaps the fear of boredom is even stronger than hate, or than the killing instinct so natural to the human brotherhood.

Jean Richepin was in those days, when the "Chansons des Gueux" were new, a striking figure, a slender and bearded, young and handsome man. Edmond Haraucourt was young and hideous. The latter had just published a book of obscene verses intended to entice old men and immature school-boys. He had a chin like a rubber boot, garnished with thinly scattered hairs and supporting a flabby, grey face with goggle eyes. Haraucourt believed himself handsome "in an ugly way," to borrow a phrase from the Romantics, and was forever puffing out his chest and reciting his poetry to an array of trembling women. He had already begun to try on the armour of Leconte de Lisle. It was not until much later that he obtained the post of curator of the Musée de Cluny by fawning on Waldeck-Rousseau, whom he compared to Pericles.

Madame Sarah Bernhardt was then another frequent visitor at the Charpentiers'. Contrary to what most people thought, she was most natural and unaffected when off the stage; more so, in fact, than any other actress I have ever met. Mounet-Sully, whom I knew better than his famous partner in "Hernani," was equally unassuming. In ordinary life, Madame Bernhardt was absolutely simple, without the least pose of any sort, not even that of simplicity. As for Mounet-Sully, he was somewhat haughty and aloof. He was a remarkable critic, capable of distinguishing the exact value of any literary production; moreover, he was entirely free from any of those weaknesses in morals or opinions which are so common in his profession. These two representatives of classic tragedy and romantic drama were above the trivialities of ordinary actors.

I cannot say as much for Jules Massenet, that odd mixture of childishness, knowledge, exaggerated sensuality, and humbug. His behaviour at a reception was characteristic. Wearing his hair smoothly brushed back off his forehead, and with his hands in his pockets, he would enter a room with a manner that was obviously on the alert but pretended to be preoccupied, murmuring some phrase which finally turned out to be an exaggerated compliment. Unable to form an opinion of a person, or to pick and choose his acquaintances, Massenet adopted once and for all the axiom that human beings love sweets, and the way to become popular is to feed them lollipops. He did this unremittingly. His first task was to compliment everyone present on his or her looks or work, after which he would sink into an armchair and act as if he were a child or a lapdog which must be fed. Milk and cake would be forthcoming, and while he lapped up the one and sprinkled the crumbs of the other, he would relate airy nothings always intended to flatter some of his listeners. Among these there were sure to be several of those old ladies who "simply adore" music and who smile lackadaisically as they display what are politely referred to as "handsome remains" of their former physical glories now fallen into decay. Massenet treated them as though they were still sweet and twenty, covering them with verbal bouquets which, in this instance, might have been funeral garlands. Meanwhile, his nimble eye, passing beyond these venerable heirlooms, would discover some really young and pretty woman modestly keeping in the background. At once he would leave his chair, get down on his hands and knees, execute a sort of Pyrrhic war dance; in short, he would perform any antic likely to amuse—or annoy—the chosen one who, for the time being, had become his Dulcinea. The musician's shallow but swooning glances seemed to implore, to demand, the prompt satisfaction of his desires. He had all the inflammable sensuality of the lyre-bird or the peacock when it spreads its tail. But social conventions still exist; husbands may be present; in short, life is never as we wish, and Massenet would be obliged quickly to allay his fever. He would go to the piano, and there he would become transfigured, really great—in fact, incomparable.

It was these elements that made Massenet's music what it is, gave it those accents of brief, consuming, frequently thwarted passion which, though judged frequently to be mere sentimentality, have conferred a lasting charm on "Manon." Always a spoiled child —frequently one who has reached his second childhood—Massenet was possessed by a spirit of sensuality that conquered his artificiality; that, indeed, mastered his entire being. In addition to this, he was forever making up anecdotes, entirely false, in which he naturally played a leading and attractive part. For instance, he related a circumstantial account of how he had brought to Alphonse Daudet, just before his death, some wonderful flowers from the south of France. The flowers were placed on the dining-room table and it was there, amidst them, that my father breathed his last. I was obliged to deny formally this ridiculous fable after it had been told to hundreds of people and had found its way into the newspapers.

Massenet's visiting cards were remarkable in size, as large and shiny as a barber's shaving dish. They bore in thick letters: "Monsieur Massenet." He detested his Christian name, Jules. On receiving a novel, he would thank you in hyperbolic phrases such as Chinese officials employ, assuring you of his complete, perfect, respectful admiration, and using such remarks as, "I trembled with joy as I opened your book," or the classic, "I stayed up all night to read it."

Once I happened to be at a reception where one of his too beautiful singers had sung one of his melodies, while he squirmed about on the piano stool like a feverish tomcat. The singer, her almost overrespectable mamma, and I left at the same time. Massenet was in the hall pretending to look for his hat and, for a change, yapping like a puppy dog. The nymph, her rose-colored cloak thrown over deliciously rounded shoulders, turned to her mother, and murmured in a tone I have never forgotten, "How he gets on my nerves—my goodness, *how* he gets on my nerves!" Then, taking his antics at their face value, she threw her bag at her dear Master as one throws a bone to a dog. But he kissed it like a holy relic, while he made his lips go all the time in imitation of a suckling child.

Massenet, though he made a great deal of money, had the reputation of being a confirmed miser. No one ever obtained as much as a smell of his home cooking. On the other hand, it would seem that his confidence in the efficacy of boundless flattery, vigorously applied on all occasions, was justified, for he left the reputation of being the most persuasive of charmers. I myself have never been able to decide whether he was clever or stupid, nor have the people whom I have consulted ever been able to cast the least light on this problem. How tiring it must have been, in either event, to play all his life the rôle of a little boy, and to distribute those innumerable glasses of syrup!

Although nothing by Maupassant was published by Charpentier, with the exception of his short story, "Boule de Suif," included in "Les Soirées de Médan," Guy (as everyone called him) was a frequent visitor at the rue de Grenelle. In those days he still had regular features and a dark complexion, was rather stout, as heavy of hand as a peasant, and usually taciturn. He had not yet become a victim of that misanthropy which, combined with his desire to play the part of a man of the world, finally brought on general paralysis. He was already attracted toward physicians, whom he respected as he would masters of the Black Art. He was in the habit of questioning them at length in halls and ante-rooms. It was in the days of the "human document," and people used to say, "Poor Guy is *so* conscientious. He is collecting pathological details to use in his next novel." One heard all sorts of strange, off-colour stories about Maupassant's behaviour, and I have always thought that his mental disorders commenced much earlier than is generally believed. He used to go in for canoeing and physical training, and pretended to despise the art of writing by which he earned his living and which made him famous. Flaubert, that relentless tormentor of his own prose, immured in his gloomy house at Le Croisset, was the man who directed Maupassant at the outset of the latter's literary career. It was he who forced Guy to indulge in all those fantastic, useless exercises of verbal contortion that serve no purpose, since in the end personality outweighs all the other factors in a writer's development. Flaubert obliged Maupassant to begin over and over again those Normandy stories, so racy and solidly constructed, which made his early reputation. The older writer adored his disciple, wholeheartedly, as he did everything else he adored. But he upset the younger man's equilibrium in more than one way, inciting him to go a-hunting for repetitions and conjunctions, to fish for musical turns of phrase, to strive for a laboured perfection of grammar and syntax. Maupassant was and remained a vain, credulous person, one of those high-school boys who are at forty still sowing their wild oats. The "bats in his belfry" were certainly not exorcised by the absurd precepts of Flaubert or the too constant attendance at the famous *gueuloir*.[1]

I have since visited that famous *gueuloir*, situated in a damp suburb of Rouen. It was on a rainy October day. My companion was a man of my own age. As we arrived we recited, not too seriously, but in the fervent accents of 1885, many a famous phrase of "Madame Bovary," "La Tentation de Saint-Antoine," and "L'Éducation Sentimentale." The door creaked as we entered. A caretaker led us first into the tiny courtyard, where stood the trees that had listened to the rhetorical performances of the kindly giant. From there we were conducted to his study, his verbal laboratory, with its view of the Seine and the passing boats. On the low couch were displayed a little collection of notes and letters from Zola, Bouilhet, Goncourt, Maupassant, my father. A horrible melancholy that dated back fifty years settled like the dust of a funeral over everything. One felt that it was a sadness that sprang more from the false creeds, the soured shibboleths, the wasted hours that had been spent in this room, than from any human mortality or material decay. Old literary quarrels transformed into spider webs hung from the ceiling. I swear, the ghost of the famous tormented and tormenting writer still lingered here. As of old he bent over his papers, smoked cigarettes, tried out the vocal effect of some ironic or *bravura* passage, plucked out a word here, dug up a fact there, trimmed and clipped some other sentence, a hundred thousand leagues removed from the world of living men. Nowhere, except at the house of Rousseau, at the Charmettes, where there still floats an odour of anarchistic phrases and of vice, have I experienced a similarly mournful impression. Flaubert, the shut-in school of literature. . . .

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[1] *Gueuloir:* literary "ranting place"; a term applied by Daudet to Flaubert's study, where the latter was in the habit of shouting or ranting aloud his sentences as he wrote them down. (Translator's note.)

Maupassant reacted against Flaubert partly with his vigorous physique, partly with his love affairs with their double casts of ladies and of ladies' maids, and settings of drawing-rooms or garrets. He had not yet published "Sur l'Eau," that sincere outcry of a soul in torment. At a party, after he had bothered his dear doctors long enough, Guy would take refuge next to a little, blonde woman, whose name I have forgotten, and in the tense manner of a madman whisper love speeches to her. What love speeches they must have been!

Having heard that I was studying to become a physician, and that I was in the habit of seeing Doctor Charcot frequently, Maupassant one evening brought up the subject of hydrotherapy. He was a great believer in it; according to him, it was destined to supplant all other forms of treatment. He had just heard about the use of an ice-cold stream of water, applied with a hose, to cure neuralgia of the eyes, and he asked me about it. I answered in an offhand, self-assured manner, being perfectly incompetent to express an opinion, but proud that I, a mere first-year student, should be questioned by the celebrated writer. It was already easy to recognize in Maupassant three separate personalities—a gifted author, a fool, and a very sick man. Each developed separately, but the two former were, little by little, absorbed by the latter. The pitilessness that is common to all young people led us to find the fool the most interesting of the three. I was not astonished to learn later that the vainest and most stupid women were able to make Maupassant look ridiculous, while his snobbishness and affectation made him an easy mark for the practical jokes and cruel teasings of society people, both men and women. Some of his tormentors, very charming ones, too, used that virility of his, of which he was always boasting, in order to humiliate him. What a series a painter like Hogarth could have made of this career, with its sombre progression from the drawing-room to the padded cell!

Maupassant was the intellectual son of Flaubert, intimately affiliated with the latter's literary clan, and consequently owed nothing whatever to Zola. This fact did not prevent the latter, whose voracity for his own children was that of Father Saturn himself, from including Guy among his disciples. He did this notably in a series of critical articles which he was just then publishing in the "Figaro," and which all revolved about his own morality and personality.

To understand Zola you should have seen him at the Charpentiers'. Fat, self-satisfied, expansive, patronizing, he trumpeted forth, in a magnificently immodest manner, the number of editions printed of his books. People who met him noticed particularly two things in his face: One the "towering" brow, as yet unwrinkled, with which he generously endowed all the characters in his books who were eminent in the financial, the artistic, or the social world, the other the nose, slightly forked like that of a hunting dog, which he was all the time handling with his sausage-shaped little fingers. Zola was vain of his feet; on great occasions, he would don varnished boots with elastic sides, arching his foot and displaying it at every opportunity. He lisped, and kept sprinkling his sentences with "Ithn't that tho?" and taking for granted the assent of his hearer. Henri Céard, the novelist, who had once been a medical student, introduced Zola to the works of Claude Bernard and Darwin, as well as to the doctrines of experimental determinism. Being in need of a patron saint of some kind, Zola selected Claude Bernard. Seen in retrospect, this choice is an amusing one, for it is not easy to find the link that connects "L'Assommoir" with the "Leçons sur la Fièvre," or "Nana" with the famous "Introduction à la Médecine Experimentale." All that the constantly hurried "Master of Médan" cared about was that this mixture should look impressive.

Zola would declare with a laugh, "When my netht book"—it happened to be "Pot-Bouille"—"comth out, people are going to thay I'm a filthy thwine, ithn't that tho? Ath a matter of fact, it *ith*, a bit true. . . . But it'th the lower middle clatheth whom I'm dethcribing, who are really to blame, not I." He used to take pleasure in comparing the obscenities and filth that filled his books with his own life, which was at that time absolutely proper, without the least hint of scandal. He declared that chastity is essential in anyone who intends to plunge into the sewers of society and bring up convincing samples of their contents. From the outset, he made Truth his god and enshrined her, pen in hand, between the manure heap and the morgue. He did not lack good humour, frankness or glibness of speech, but knew how to be spiteful and venomous when the occasion arose. He was capable of dissimulation. Among those whom he hated was Edmond de Goncourt, and the latter reciprocated heartily. Their characters were not made to agree. Goncourt was an aristocrat, from the tips of his delicate fingers and the points of his white mustache to his dark, flaming glance. He possessed the instincts of the prophets of old. Even before Drumont's "La France Juive" had appeared, Goncourt already hated and despised the Jews. He disliked extremely everything connected with representative government; democracy made him sick. He was an admirable, a sensitive artist, a lover of rare engravings, of elegancy of outline, of everything that was incisive, stripped to its essentials. Zola, on the other hand, was expansive, explicatory, controversial, and more and more ready as time went on to accept revolutionary panaceas. He spoke of politicians as clowns and jumping-jacks, in order to please the reactionary public that read the "Figaro," but at heart he believed as they did in the power of numbers, of words, of wealth.

His conception of the world was a summary. Intricate, subtle things displeased him. He put instinct before everything else. His intelligence was wholly materialistic. "What a beast that Zola of yours is, anyway!" Edmond de Goncourt would say impatiently, as from the next room came the voice of the counter-of-copies-sold, declaring: "When I thaw that we'd get to fifty thouthand, my good fellow, I thaid to mythelf we'll get to thixty, thure . . . ithn't that tho, Tharpentier?"

Zola interrupted this interminable enumeration of his successes to come over and congratulate us, the youngsters, on our youth, and because we behaved in a youthful manner. As my friends and I were between sixteen and eighteen, it would have been difficult for us to behave otherwise.

"Léon, who ith that boy there with the intelligent profile? Ith he a friend of yourth?"

"Yes, Monsieur Zola."

"What'th hith name?"

"It's Georges Hugo, Monsieur Zola."

"Ah, how thmall the world ith. Ith Georges Hugo thtudying medithine, too?"

"No, he is interested in painting and literature."

"Ah, tho that'th young Hugo! How curiouth—what a wonderful thing it ith to be young. . . . Perhapth I wath a bit too thevere on hith grandfather. What doeth it matter, after all? I'm told he doethn't read anything any more. He hath hith fame to digetht, the lucky man! What a thmall world it ith!"

It is difficult, at a distance, to understand how naturalism—"pontoon literature," as Huysmans called it—created the excitement that it did. Doubtless it was because it was a reaction against the insipidities of Feuillet, Feydeau and Cherbuliez. Following the war of 1870, the public, in that depression of spirits which accompanies a military defeat, was hungry for anything that would give the impression of strength and vigour, even though it were also bitter, brutal or even blasphemous. The pig succeeded in passing himself off as a wild boar. With the exception of Barbey d'Aurevilly and Drumont, very few of the contemporary writers and moralists called attention to the catastrophe. Like the bursting of a sewer, masses of filth and mud suddenly spurted up over French literature. Indeed, I have heard Zola and his night-soil novels defended by refined persons of delicate tastes, poets such as Coppée and Banville, gifted observers of human nature such as Alphonse Daudet. All my generation believed—at least for a time—in the rebirth of literature in accordance with the canons of "naturalist" art. The writings of Taine, who in our philosophy classes counterbalanced the German metaphysicians and Herbert Spencer, strengthened us in our error.

Looking back, I can remember having considered Drumont somewhat of a prude and Barbey d'Aurevilly somewhat of a bigot, whereas Zola seemed to me a man of moderate intelligence (nothing he said was worth remembering) but a really great creator, who could depict crowds in action, and was deeply versed in physiology and the work of the medical laboratories. I felt that as a writer he was unjustly slandered. It was a time of extreme blindness on the part of those who were said to be reconstructing France and her intellectual life, but who in reality sought to suppress all critical examination of existing political, literary or philosophical creeds. When I look back upon that chaos, that dark confusion, those amazing fallacies, I can judge what injuries an invasion inflicts upon a free, noble-hearted country. I know this, I feel it, I see it, all the more because it was the generation to which I belong that in the end bore the full weight of the catastrophe. To be sure, I was nothing but a witness, not a participant, in the things I am now telling about, but a witness whose testimony is valuable on account of his relations to the circle which had for its center his famous and much sought after father. It took me twenty years longer to learn—partly from events themselves, partly from the genius of Charles Maurras, and partly from a creed based on reason—what no one had ever taught me, namely, the real inwardness of my country and the manner in which she may be redeemed.

* * *

But let us go out to Médan. It is a warm, golden-dusted, June day. Huysmans is present, mocking in manner, lank of form, resembling a tameable but not yet tamed vulture. His irony is benevolent, and he ends each sentence with a peculiar drawl. No one can imitate his way of saying, of an unpopular fellow-author, "Indeed, he is a *most* disconcerting sort of creature." Hennique, Henri Céard, Paul Alexis, Frantz Jourdain participate either singly or together in the conversation that is carried on by Zola, our host, Goncourt and Alphonse Daudet. My father, as usual, is the life and soul of the party. He radiates kindliness; at the same time, he lightly caricatures people and things. Zola at home is more agreeable, livelier, than elsewhere. He understands and knows how to practice the art of hospitality. It is he who suggests that we go boating. The rest acquiesce. These care-free writers, already celebrities or on the high road to fame, chat and sing as they bend over their oars. No one would imagine that in the near future an abyss would separate them, that they would become strangers, even enemies, to one another.

CHAPTER II

Down South—Mistral and His Friends—Memories of Provence—Alphonse Daudet Goes to Market—Lemerre's Book Shop—Heredia—Barbey d'Aurevilly, Last of the Romantics—Leconte de Lisle—Sully Prudhomme—François Coppée.

WHILE Zola was uniting the romantic and realistic schools by means of a system of open-air sewerage in accordance with his personal tastes, a revival of French literature in the Provençal language was producing several works of great beauty. Back of every revival we find some one genius and his effort. In the present instance, the name of Frédéric Mistral has already occurred to the reader. Beside him stand Roumanille and Aubanel, the former laden like a honey bee with the various aromas of his native soil, the latter one of the finest, saddest of lyric poets.

Alphonse Daudet was always the friend, the faithful comrade in arms of Mistral; he taught me from my earliest youth to love and admire the Provençal. Daudet's "L'Arlésienne" belongs to this southern cycle, as does also his volume, "Contes de Mon Moulin." Some of my happiest, most deeply cherished memories are connected with the magic group of Provençal writers. I used to sing about "Un Bâtiment Vient de Majorque" and "Jean de Gonfaron" of the "Golden Isles" in the days when I knew the nursery rhymes about "Malbrouck s'en Va-t-en Guerre" and "La Tour Prends Garde." While I was still a tiny toddler I ate olives and fresh figs, was allowed a sip of the wine of the Châteauneuf-du-Pape on holidays, and as far back as I can remember the word "Provence" has meant to me white roads between cypress trees, merry choruses, laughter and the best of jolly times.

"Oh, let that little chap of yours run about, Alphonse. He'll find his way back all right."

"My dear madame, I assure you that never in the memory of man did a bit of fowl too much give a small boy indigestion."

"Léon, my lad, look at that bridge over there. It was built by the famous Saint Benézet."

"Oh, Monsieur Mistral, I *know* all those stories are just made up, and didn't really happen!"

All this makes it natural for me to be much amused when I hear some fools declare that the works of Mistral and his friends are compilations made in a library, bookish volumes only, the result of experiments in folklore and language made behind closed doors. The contrary is true—never did epics or lyrics, poems of passion or melancholy, or tales rich in subtle irony, spring more spontaneously from the daily round of joys and cares, from those moments of golden sunshine or silvery moonlight in which they were born and which they immortalize. In them we find a native realism, a realism springing from good sound minds familiar with every nook and corner of the countryside. In them there are the aroma and the colour of freshly baked bread.

Those who met the principal members of this group had the privilege of knowing collaborators in a great work, the preservation of contact between a race and its traditions. Opposing the Jacobins and the levelling processes of democracy, hostile to the ugliness of false "realism," these inspired poets, while labouring in behalf of one small district, helped to strengthen the nation as a whole. Fifty years passed before their noble work was entirely understood, before its conservative tendencies became apparent. From the point of view of law and order, to revive is to restore.

Let us speak first of Mistral, as is his due. I knew the old house wherein his mother died and which stands close to his own, in which he lived with his noble wife. On the chimney piece stood a little *tarasque*, the mythical beast that figures in the traditions of the town of Tarascon, balancing its head backwards and forwards in a most alarming manner.

My father's visit meant general rejoicing, delightful trips to Les Baux, to Avignon, to Arles or to Vaucluse, through a region rich in history and legend, where every least stone was proud of having been mentioned in a verse of "Mireille," of "Calendal," of "Nerte," of "Reine Jeanne," of the "Poème du Rhône." It was these excursions that gave me, I fancy, my fondness for the wayside inns wherein one finds such amusing surprises, makes such entertaining acquaintances, and where the food is often so delicious. How those inns were turned upside down when the gay and talkative men of letters descended upon them! What a succession of songs and stories flowed freely until, drawn by the common link of race, youth and language, the landlord, the landlady, the other guests and the waitresses all joined in! There was never any vulgarity, any undue familiarity. To hear Mistral, in that clear, melodious voice of his, recite his verses, the cook, with frying pan suspended, would almost forget the omelette, the waiter pouring out the Tavel wine would pause, the bottle with its ruby-coloured liquid still in mid air. Thanks to the well-defined class distinctions which form part of still potent traditions and customs—at least in thy country, O my Provence!—we may still feel that the brotherhood of man is no vain phrase.

It is impossible for me to pass by Saint-Rémy or to follow the road between Les Baux and Fontvieille without seeing again that glorious little company. Years have passed without altering Mistral's glance, his voice, his stately carriage, or his smile. As he has never left Maillane, where he was born, the entire village has become as familiar to him as though it were his own house; every stone, every turning, has become more human, thanks to his presence. His shadow extends over everything. People have compared Mistral with Goethe—he is himself.

What one notices particularly in Mistral's remarks are their depth, the symmetry of his point of view, the broadness of his vision, as befits a descendant of men who have looked long on wide fields and star-filled skies. So I remember him down the vista of thirty years or more, judging equitably men and events, singing the praises of his province, and elaborating methodically, unremittingly his idea for her reconstruction, on a scale more grand than even his friends have realized. He is as clear, as limpid as a spring, but like the spring he is deep. Nor does his kindliness exclude reserve. In Paris, Mistral was criticized. My father was assailed with: "Why doesn't your Mistral write in French? The idea of reviving a local language that has become merely a dialect! It's a dream, a chimera! Daudet, your friendship makes you take this movement too seriously." Since then it has been proved that Mistral's ideals were anything but chimeric, that they were sternly practical. The attitude of the Master of Maillane stimulated and encouraged the superb resistance of Alsace and Lorraine; those who upheld the heroic soul of Alsace, her hopes and customs, did so with the weapons that Mistral had forged. They employed his methods, they made his principles their rallying cries. Incomparably the most gifted of all our poets—including Hugo—Frédéric Mistral is familiar with those magic formulas that link the State and the Word and add to the strength of both. He is also a sorcerer in the etymological sense of the word, a discoverer of gushing springs. Never does he strike in vain the sterile rock. I believe not only that Mistral is great now, but that the future will augment his greatness. Those shelters which he constructed and of which he sang, will, in days to come, afford a refuge for defeated nations seeking to escape the yoke of their oppressors. His dictionary, his poems, his plays, his speeches, the commemorative *fêtes* which he organized, the costumes he preserved, the example of a long life spent in one place where will stand his tomb, all these form a whole that defies time and forgetfulness.[1]

Since I am speaking about Provence, I must not neglect to mention Saint-Estève and the Parrocel family. In 1885 the head of the house was a magnificent old man who was well versed in history and poetry, and a descendant of the Parrocels of Marseilles, famous painters, chiefly known for their battle scenes. He had made his fortune by unremitting labour. His wife, the delightful Madame Parrocel, was her husband's partner, comrade, constant associate and friend. Both had a genius for hospitality. They were familiar with the habits of authors who mingle work and meditation, and they never insisted on organizing those collective excursions that are the bane of so many country house parties. If So-and-so liked to go off by himself he would be provided with a basket of provisions, and a little carriage would be hitched up in which he could ramble from dawn to dusk along the borders of the Durance or the slopes of the Luberons, miniature Alps humanized and reduced in scale to the dimensions of the hills in a Florentine painting. Perhaps What's-his-name enjoys shooting? Well, get him a gun and a well-trained dog—the intrepid Sultan for instance, who belongs to Uncle Tourel—and send him out after quail. Some visitors prefer to stay near the house, to stroll up and down the garden paths. Others take an interest in the commissary department (we are always twelve or fifteen at every meal). These visit the picturesque market of Cabane, Plan-Orgon or Orgon, where melons are piled one on top of the other, and varnished egg-plants glow beside bright-red tomatoes. Still other guests spend their time reading, while others prepare, in deepest secrecy, the charades and amusements for the evening.

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[1] Written in 1913. Mistral died in 1914. (Translator's note.)

Two persons always kept things going. One was Alphonse Daudet, in whom the air of Provence restored his youth and high spirits; the other was Félix Baret, for many years mayor of Marseilles, and son-in-law of Parrocel. He was an extremely eloquent lawyer, a pillar of the Republic in the south of France, and a man beside whom the liveliest persons looked like sad and sour Huguenots. Beneath this abundance of gaiety and merriment, however, there was a solid foundation of first-rate legal knowledge that was always at the disposal of his political party and his personal friends. Adviser and guide to the majority of those members of his party who held office between 1875 and 1900, Baret could have been a cabinet minister a dozen times over, had he so desired. He preferred the honours of the bar and municipal government, putting the rest aside with a good nature not altogether free from contempt. Ah, if he had but written his memoirs! Baret remained firmly attached to certain persons. Among them was Madame Edmond Adam, whose name is associated with Saint-Estève. This was one of his most enduring attachments. He alone knew the burdens of every kind, especially financial, which that admirable woman assumed in order to aid her country. Had Baret not been by her side with his thorough knowledge of business matters, Madame Adam would have ruined herself for France.

You can imagine what a meal was like that was animated by Daudet and Baret, and how swiftly the bottles of Tavel, of Hermitage, of Côtes-Rôties would disappear, under the pretext that they were spoiled!

"But if they aren't good, why do you insist on drinking them?" inquired the ladies ("who never know how to appreciate good liquor," as I heard a genial drunkard say one night in a suburban railway station).

"We drink them up so they won't spoil any more," replied the incorrigible husbands. The cellars of Saint-Estève were inexhaustible, the watchful host taking care each year to re-stock them for the coming season.

Baret still looked like a "terrible Turk," with his black hair and beard, and his bright, mocking glance. His manner was generally gay, but he was quite capable of becoming serious when it was necessary. He was, indeed, a charmer, and he has doubtless remained one, since such gifts endure. When some lawsuit obliged him to go to Marseilles, he would return laden with packages; eatables, *pâtés,* and little bottles which he extracted with infinite care from under the seat of the carriage, saying as he did so, "Hold that horse! Hold him as tight as if he were drawing the chariot of state!"

Visitors abounded at Saint-Estève. One was Edmond de Goncourt, whom my father brought there and who seemed to enjoy thoroughly the contrast between his native Lorraine and this corner of Provence. Goncourt's diaries, when they at last appear, will tell us his impressions of a circle wherein many people and things must have appeared strange to him at first. Everyone took pains to make his stay an agreeable one. I recall a conversation on cooking in which Baret, with a politeness all his own, admitted the superiority of a dish of crayfish and eels, known as a *matelote,* over the *bouillabaisse.* It was a pious fib, for which I trust Goncourt, who dearly loved the crayfish of the Meuse, was duly grateful. My regard for strict historical veracity, however, obliges me to add that even while he was speaking Baret gave me a barely perceptible wink, as much as to say, "Don't worry, Léon, I am no renegade; I am merely trying to be agreeable to this illustrious visitor from the eastern provinces." This was as it should be, for the best of *matelotes,* compared with the soup of gold, is like a misty landscape contrasted with the glories of the southern sunset. Then add the magic aroma of the garlic!

Another day it is Aubanel, also a poet, who drops in. His reception is a cordial one. Baret is especially glad to see him, for Aubanel has stored away in his memory more poetry than has any other man in France. He speaks Provençal as easily, as fluently and as perfectly as he does French. When lunch is over, there is a unanimous cry, "Recite us 'La Vénus d'Arles.' " "Not in here," declares Alphonse Daudet, "not in here, out of doors, in the sunshine and the open air." We go out to the porch. In that setting the poem takes on its true proportions, its full meaning. It harmonizes with the circumambient warmth of the air and sky; word and sun glow together.

It was at Saint-Estève that my father dictated to me the intensely tragic play he drew from his novel "Sapho." A certain Adolphe Belot, a decent enough little person, with a brick-red complexion, blinking eyes, and very moderate intelligence (he belonged to the attractive, frivolous, and now extinct school of boulevard writers), had already tried to make a dramatization of the book. But, though his play followed the general plan which he and Daudet had agreed upon, it did not please my father, and the latter rewrote it from beginning to end. I can still see him underneath the great tree that served as our study, his pipe in his mouth, one finger holding it in place as he first tries out, then discards, and finally adopts the sentences of Fanny, Jean Gaussin and Caoudal. Nothing could be more interesting than to follow step by step the working of this incessantly active mind, which took reality as its point of departure, but was always guided by the emotions. Before writing down a phrase I would pause, waiting for the paternal imagination to crystallize. And thus the "son of the author of 'Sapho,' " as my school-fellows called me, was initiated into the mysteries of his craft far more agreeably than was "poor Guy" at Croisset. When we had worked well, we took our reward from a bottle of Noilly Prat vermouth, clear and dry as an autumn morning, which we kept cool by suspending it from a string in the little fountain nearby. We hid our one and only glass and assumed an innocent expression whenever my mother, Madame Baret or Madame Parrocel happened to come in our direction. This use of a fountain, a device which I recommend to all lovers of vermouth, is recorded in the beginning of the fourth act of "Sapho," and is attributed to Uncle Césaire. Every time I see the play performed it takes me back to those radiant mornings at Saint-Estève.

When in Paris, away from his beloved Provence, Alphonse Daudet every week gave himself the illusion of being back there, by taking me to a shop in the rue Turbigo called "Aux Produits du Midi," where they sold all sorts of southern products. Here, for instance, one could get genuine olive oil, so different from the horrible mixture one finds at most grocery stores. Vegetables were there in season, little new peas, tender artichokes, melons or clingstone peaches. There was even small game. Isolated from the world at large by a piece of plate glass, the terrible cacha, that lively cheese, was preserved between grape or mulberry leaves, and concentrated in itself all its powerful but delectable aromas. Candied fruits from Apt stood on the shelves beside the *calissons* from Aix and the peppermints of Carpentras. At times there appeared here the *poutarge* of Martigues. Made of mullets' eggs, it is, to my mind, more delicate, both in immediate flavour and in secondary perfume, than the Russian caviar. Tempted by the salesman (was it a Crestes or a Roudils? One never can tell with partners, and both of these were from the south), my father would fill his pockets and mine with little packages of this or that. He never knew how to say "No, thank you, I have enough." I, indeed, have learned how to say it, but only ungraciously, or even angrily, in a way that irritates the shopkeeper, whereas the accomplished buyer knows how to refuse with a smile. We always came home, from these expeditions, laden with unnecessary provender, but so proud of our purchases that no one dared scold us.

Coming back from Crestes' and Roudils', our way led through the markets, past the booths laden with fish and other sea-food. It was difficult to decline the picturesque invitations of the fishwives, paddling about in the water and the refuse in their rubber overshoes: "Hey there, you, the gentleman with the eyeglass, don't you like oysters? I've got some lovely fresh ones. Here's a bunch of fine shrimps for your son. Just see how sweet and clean they look!" Once more we would succumb and would load ourselves with new grey and yellow paper packages that emitted odours of the seashore. Needless to say, we would frequently have ghastly leavings of yesterday and the day before passed off on us, the tradespeople taking advantage of my youth and of my father's near-sightedness. Generally, it ended by our hailing a cab.

On the way home, we frequently stopped at Alphonse Lemerre's bookstore in the Passage Choiseul. What a pleasant memory I have of that friend of the Muses, of his bearded, hearty countenance, and his laugh that showed every one of his big teeth! How I remember the discussions that used to go on in the large room filled with books, whence a spiral staircase led to the first floor. My old friend Desiré Lemerre still lives in the same place, but I never go there nowadays. If I did, I know I should find the shop haunted by too many dear memories, and should end by bursting into tears, like a fool, in front of the engraving, "The Man with the Spade," which figures in the Lemerre colophon. How many graves that spade has dug since the man who wields it untiringly began his labour over the doorway of that famous shop!

Certain writers—some very notable ones, at that—have had troubles with their publishers. But such a thing never happened to my father, the friend of Charpentier, of Lemerre, of Fasquelle, or Arthème Fayard, and the intimate of Flammarion and of Dentu. Nor has it ever happened to me. Difference in personal and political opinions has never prejudiced my affectionate dealings with Eugène Fasquelle, Charpentier's successor, who has published nineteen volumes of mine without any more formal contract than an oral agreement which has lasted for twenty-two years. Arthème Fayard, the popularizer of good literature, is my oldest school-fellow. We take a melancholy pleasure in talking over old times, and I hope that our sons will be as firm friends as their fathers have been. Our friendship dates back some thirty years, *n'est-ce pas*, mon cher Arthème? Finally, there is George Valois, who publishes these souvenirs. Valois is not only a brother-writer, but also a companion in arms. Who but he would have dared to issue such a book as "L'Avant Guerre?"

Whenever we went to Lemerre's, my father and I, we were practically sure of meeting one or more of several persons, whom I will describe. José-Maria de Heredia was a magnificent specimen, pale with dark colouring, and bearded to the eyes. I have never heard anyone stutter with such force and authority. He used this defect in his speech to emphasize the essential phrases of his famous sonnets:

"Et de ce m. . m. . m. . . . arbre mort on fait un Dieu vivant."
"Comme une mer im. . . . mm. . . . mense où ffffuyaient des galères."

Sometimes it would be at the beginning of a sentence that he curbed his speech on the tips of his red, curling lips:

"Qu'il soit en c. . . c. . . c. . . courtiné de beb. . . r. . . r . . rocard ou de serge."

These too familiar verses, with their echoes of Gérard de Nerval, have to-day become like old sea shells that have lost their resonance. But at that time they had not yet been published in book form. Nevertheless, they were already celebrated. No sooner had Heredia, naturally an idler, composed a sonnet than he would take it out walking with him, recite it here and there about town while he puffed at his huge, exquisitely perfumed cigars, and let each listener or group of listeners feel especially favoured to be the first to hear it. The slightness of his literary baggage contributed considerably to his celebrity. He was a man not only *unius libri*, but rather *unius libelli*. To the irritable and jealous horde of brother-writers he appeared, consequently, less redoubtable than if he had presented himself backed by a dozen novels or plays in verse. Much shall be pardoned him because he has written little. Besides his sonnets, he was working on a translation of a "Véridique Histoire de la Conquête de la Nouvelle Espagne," from which he was ever ready to quote, with a haughty glance, many a resounding sentence. Finally, just below the horizon, there hovered eternally a "Don Quixote," which was to be an exact translation of the original text into French, a faithful reproduction of Cervantes' masterpiece. It is unfortunate that it never saw the light. Heredia was a former member of the École des Chartes, a scholar quite as much as a poet, an admirer of Quicherat, the archæologist, of Morel-Fatio, and of Mérimée. He was an agreeable man to meet, but he had no real personality of his own. After a brilliant début and an academic triumph, his literary career, as we shall see presently, was sad enough. The Lemerre days were his happiest.

We shall note again and again in this volume the ups and downs of literary reputations. So-and-so, after a brilliant beginning, disappears soon into obscurity, whereas another writer who has laboured long and obscurely attains celebrity suddenly. It is quite unusual for an author to remain on the crest of the wave throughout his life.

Another *habitué* of Lemerre's was Barbey d'Aurevilly. To him the public has been doubly unjust; first, in not recognizing his considerable gifts, secondly, in enlarging on the tradition that made him nothing more than a ridiculous dandy and denied him his just deserts. Whatever may have been true of his early years, d'Aurevilly, when I knew him at Lemerre's, had a genuine nobility of attitude, with a turn of phrase and a wit that were all his own. Poor, but proud as Lucifer, as full of fantastic notions as Cervantes' hero, but remarkably lucid in some of his opinions, d'Aurevilly held firmly to his beliefs and prejudices at a time when everything had become unhinged by the sheer weight of democratic stupidity. He had the wit of a Rivarol and the lightness of touch of a Châteaubriand, with far more logic than the latter. The magical creator of the "Chevalier des Touches" and the "Vieille Maîtresse," dreamed, like some old eagle, of the landscapes of his Channel province. He filled me, lad that I was, with the profoundest admiration. D'Aurevilly's head touched the stars. He was unlike any other man of letters whom I ever knew. His aphorisms, his condemnations, his laudations, descended upon us as from some higher sphere. One cold winter's day, my father took him from Lemerre's to a restaurant in the Champs-Élysées. I have forgotten the name of it. When they arrived, both were vehemently discussing Flaubert, whom Daudet defended passionately, while his companion attacked him no less vehemently. I walked beside them deeply interested, for at our home Flaubert was king.

When they had chosen a table and had sat down, Daudet inquired, "What will you drink?"

"Champagne," replied d'Aurevilly, as one might say, "Bring me hydromel." The old, toothless warrior, whose whistling speech was so irresistible, proceeded to swallow four or five glasses of the foaming silver. Then he began to talk, and such were his vigour and eloquence that the cashier of the restaurant, fascinated, could not take her eyes off him. My father spoke in his turn. Twilight fell, the gas was lighted. Perhaps an hour later, having again become thirsty, the irrepressible Barbey ordered, "Another bottle of champagne, if you please, madame." I was amazed. D'Aurevilly wore a great black cape, lined with white, and the inside of his high hat was of scarlet satin. Who, having the privilege of hearing him speak, would have dared laugh at him? His voice added importance to his words. He raised and lowered it most harmoniously; he would have made an accomplished orator. Always attracted towards what was rare and fine, he possessed a fund of anecdotes, of love and war, in which the grim and the gay alternated in a manner thoroughly French. Imagine chapters of Brantôme's "Dames Galantes" interpolated in Plutarch's "Lives!" I have pictured him as a great and noble drinker. One evening, at our country place at Champrosay, the servant, by mistake, poured out instead of the white wine a very old prune brandy, overmellow and exceedingly potent. D'Aurevilly was in the habit of draining his glass at one draught. Before we had time to warn him, he tossed off the contents of his goblet, nor was he in the slightest flustered, as though he were quite used to the potation.

He disliked intensely some of his fellow-writers, for the looseness of their literary style and the vulgarity of their ideas. On the other hand, he was most kind and indulgent toward various hard-working and shabby scribes who earned a precarious living as journalists. He was fond of quoting Byron and the Lake poets, Shakespeare, the fathers of the church and the great classic authors. Altogether, he was an admirable figure, a diamond which nothing could scratch but a stone of the same hardness. And such could not be found among his contemporaries.

Very different was Leconte de Lisle. To be sure, he had a handsome, clean-shaven face and wore a haughty expression behind his monocle, but he smelt of the leather-bottomed chair. He was but the parlour lion, the office-seeker from overseas, the embittered and dissatisfied employee who sneers at his superiors. I know that the race of marble beings that throngs the pages of his "Poèmes Barbares" have found a host of admirers, but he always left me cold. He seemed to me just a marble-cutter, armed with hammer and chisel; I could not be enthusiastic over him. The curious thing about his career was that he always kept under lock and key the satirist and polemist he might have been. We catch but a glimpse of this side of him in his descriptions of Hugo, "stupid as the Himalayas," and of Zola, "the epic swine." He showed us in his verses only the contemplative side of his character. These are like the patterns, rich and complicated, that frost draws on the window-pane. The other side, the combative side of his nature, was kept hidden, nor can it be reconstructed even from the memories of his intimate friends. Indeed, I consider Leconte de Lisle to have been one of the few persons who have never revealed their true personalities. He seemed a poet whom his own poetry could not save (in spite of what Goethe says), and who kept shut up within himself a tortured soul. One thing is sure, we can never hope to possess the key to the mystery; it is lost in a maze of symmetrical figures.

I used to meet Leconte de Lisle not only at Lemerre's but also at home and in the Luxembourg gardens. There he paced up and down the alleys, puffing out his cheeks in a manner to make one think of a ferocious baby. He always wore one of those vast, shiny hats, shaped like a blunderbuss, which Mallarmé described as "shadowy meteors." I had been brought up to respect him, but my feeling of respect was mixed with uneasiness. As he strolled along, he seemed to be hoping that death and damnation should overtake all his contemporaries. His face was hard and fixed as a tombstone. As for his poems, they reminded me of ice-grottos full of stalactites shaped like elephants' trunks or bakers' turbans. This eminent maker of cut-glass carafes, this person who hammered out flat-footed alexandrines, had discovered the secret of freezing solid the Iliad and the Odyssey. In his translation the combatants of the Iliad remind us of nothing so much as a row of corpses in the Morgue, and the adventures of Ulysses of cold-storage rooms on board an ocean liner. Leconte de Lisle is one of those too-perfect authors who should be read only as one lies between two warm sheets, with a hot-water bag at one's feet. I admit, shamefacedly, that even under these conditions I could not stay awake long. Note also this curious fact: Madame Leconte de Lisle, a quiet, shy-looking woman, a sort of sacred dragon-fly who must have been attractive at one time, used to come and see us with her famous husband. Never did I hear her utter one single word; the verses of the master had petrified her. It was said of Leconte de Lisle that, although hostile to the Empire, he received a pension from the Imperial government. But this alone would not be sufficient to explain his constant air of uneasiness. I should say it was due to the prodigious amount of bilious hatred which he kept bottled up inside himself. He was like an executioner spending a day in the country who has forgotten to bring his axe along. You catch the glitter of it in his eyes, all the same.

What a difference there was between Leconte de Lisle and Sully Prudhomme, the friend of mathematics and mankind! I knew him only after he had become stout and puffy, but how charming and kind he was, and how friendly, like a masterpiece in the twilight. Seen with the light behind him, he looked like a portrait, not by Rembrandt himself but by one of Rembrandt's most skilful pupils. He was extremely conscientious. He liked to say, "I will think it over; I'll consider the matter; I have been thinking about what you said to me." His scrupulousness in regard to philosophy, to literature, even to grammar, was almost morbid. He treated boys as though they were already grown men. Having heard that I was a promising scholar, he invited me one morning to his apartment in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, where he read to me selections in Latin and French. I could not follow the former in the least (it was from Lucretius and very difficult), but kept saying, "Yes, sir; very true, sir."

He was kind enough not to question me, but to act as though I were Turnèbe, the philologist, or Pico de la Mirandola. He said: "You are studying to be a doctor, are you not? but I notice that you have strong literary tendencies."

"I am extremely fond of books, sir."

"You should keep up those tastes. Even in the domain of science, a general culture is useful. Listen to what Pascal has to say about it."

He read certain passages. I wanted to show him that I admired his books and knew many of his poems by heart, but he appeared to consider this side of his work unimportant. He was, just then, entirely absorbed in the philosophy of æsthetics. Laying aside Pascal, he launched forth on a long dissertation on the subject which engrossed him. His point of view appeared to me ingenious but arbitrary, and soon I did not pay much attention to what he was saying. He made me promise to come to see him often. This I did later, after I had published my first book, a series of very dull dialogues on metaphysics. Sully Prudhomme, most excellent man, took the trouble to analyze them line by line, and was prepared to controvert my arguments! How proud I was, but how upset! At that time he was on a milk diet and as he attacked my objectivism—which was not really mine at all, but my professor's—he lapped away at his cup exactly as would a cat. His handsome face had become waxen and motionless. His measured lyricism, that seems as if it might derive from some Pythagorean vision, was dead within him. His only remaining interests were Wisdom and her half-sister Science. His mind was like a limpid stream, in whose depths occasionally appeared the shadow of a blackboard.

The life and soul of the gatherings at Lemerre's bookstore was François Coppée. With the mischievous grey eyes of the born Parisian, set in a profile that might have been that of some old Roman, he was amusing and full of life. Like Banville, he never let go of his cigarette, and he had a manner of speaking somewhat like that of the older man, with the teeth closed—and rather indistinct. His favorite gesture was pulling down his cuffs. He stressed the leter *r;* for instance, in the word *prrrrodigious.* He used to make fun of his own quaint ideas, that kept following each other through his own brain, like the toy figures one sees in a Punch-and-Judy show. He combined natural kindness with critical acumen and shrewd literary judgment, and was an ideal friend. I saw a great deal of him, from the days of my earliest youth until his death, and more and more frequently as the years went on, for my father was very fond of his company. The remark, "Coppée will be here," meant that the dinner and the rest of the evening would be delightful. In the Lemerre days the author of "Le Passant," "Severo Torelli" and "Intimités" would have been astonished had you told him that the time would come when he would take an active part in politics. But his indifference was not in the least offensive. It was rather the natural indifference to politics of a poet who has had to make his way up from poverty and who, having achieved success and financial ease, relishes them as a school-boy does his holidays. Coppée already referred to Napoleon as "the grrreat Emperror." He liked stories of battles, with their mixture of the heroic and the matter-of-fact, such as Hugo has given us in that chapter of "Les Misérables" entitled, "L'Idylle rue Plumet et l'Épopée rue Saint-Denis." Like Alphonse Daudet, Coppée knew how to make all sorts of subjects interesting. Everything he touched turned to gold.

This poet who celebrated the joys and sorrows of the "little folk" was simple and wholesome, like a loaf of good bread. He was always ready to do anyone a favour, to try to place a manuscript, to obtain a payment in advance from a publisher, or procure academic rewards and "bits of ribbon" for some less fortunate writer. His conversion was the fitting end of a life entirely made up of gentleness and angelic charity. You should have seen him as he gave alms to a poverty-stricken person in the street or in the hall of his little apartment, in the due Oudinot! His nature was reserved, but he knew how to fraternize with all sorts of people on terms of perfect equality. He used to talk about the good actions of others with a sort of brotherly tenderness, and his mocking glance would soften as he referred to the noble devotion that Miss Read showed for Barbey d'Aurevilly. Coppée despised shams of all kinds, but no one entertained a more kindly tolerance for the weaknesses and make-believe of those second-rate actors in the human comedy whose whims and ways furnish such inexhaustible material for humorous observation.

All this time, a certain man was living and writing but keeping much to himself. His critical articles in the "Liberté" were remarkable and were widely noted. He visited only a few intimate friends, among whom were my father and Albert Duruy. He was still young, strong and slender, bearded and with a mass of jet black hair which he wore brushed back and flattened down. His name was Édouard Drumont. We were very fond of him. Personally, I found myself attracted to him because he knew how to talk to young people. His literary and other opinions were based on firm foundations, and with him one had a sense of safety, of solidity. Some persons have a faculty for diminishing everything they come in contact with; they are marked with the algebraic sign "minus"; Edouard Drumont was marked "plus." You were glad to see him come in and to be able to agree with him the instant he uttered an opinion. He fenced with extreme violence, and had a daredevil way of fighting that was as dangerous for himself as for his adversary. My father used to say, "Drumont is right to keep in training; that book he is working on is going to create a rumpus." What was the book? I asked no questions, as I hate indiscreet curiosity. But when we finished a bout—Alphonse Daudet, Drumont and I—in the little fencing room on the ground floor of our house in the avenue de l'Observatoire, there would always be, lying about, half-a-dozen broken foils.

CHAPTER III

The First Night of "Les Rois en Exil"—The Revival of "Le Roi s'Amuse"—"Philosophy B" at Louis-le-Grand—Burdeau and Some of His Pupils—Paul Claudel—Marcel Schwob—Gambetta's Tragic Death—The Poets' Vigil around Hugo's Corpse—A National Disgrace—Hugo's Funeral.

THE reception of two plays, both produced about this time and both dealing with the Monarchy, illustrates how people in the literary world felt in regard to the subject in those days, and permits us to judge the difference that thirty years have made.

The earlier of the two was "Les Rois en Exil." My father was a friend of Constant Coquelin, better known in the history of the stage as Coquelin the elder, and I had his son Jean as one of my school-mates at Louis-le-Grand. Coquelin the elder was, at one and the same time, a fervent supporter of the Republic, an intimate friend of Gambetta, and on excellent terms with Waldeck-Rousseau. Thus he might well consider himself almost a statesman and a pillar of the Republic, though his hearty and well-fed air fitted him better for those comic parts in which he achieved his prodigious success. He tried to counteract his appearance by assuming a weighty, frock-coated attitude, and trying to look like a retired statesman who acts Molière for his own amusement. I hasten to add that he was a very worthy sort of person, and his childish pretentiousness is remembered everywhere with amusement rather than with ill feeling. Coquelin took a fancy to a certain poet, Paul Delair, who was mournful, dark, and hollow. He had transmitted this enthusiasm to his son, and Jean Coquelin recited to us the lines about Beaumarchais and popular government composed by this freak, who was also a protégé of Gambetta's:

Dès que, pour lui prêter main-forte,
Un pan de la Bastille morte
Sortait de terre seulement,
J'accourais, battant la cymbale,

Chacun de mes mots faisait balle,
Et c'était un écroulement.[1]

Rostand could have done no worse.

Acting on Coquelin's suggestions, Delair dramatized "Les Rois en Exil." He read his manuscript to us at our house in the avenue de l'Observatoire. Gambetta, Étienne, Doctor Charcot, Édouard Drumont (who has described the scene), and a few others were present.

To judge, in such conditions, the value of a play, is out of the question. Politeness prevents the listeners from expressing their real opinions, and, if they did so, the author would pay no attention. On this particular occasion, Coquelin displayed so fervent an admiration for the work that it would have seemed sacrilegious to pronounce the least criticism. He read the text in a martial voice, as though it were a case of defying the "light cavalrymen" of the "Right" and annihilating all the anti-Republicans. The play was accepted by the Théâtre du Vaudeville, was admirably acted by Dieudonné and Marie Legrand—and proved an utter failure! The club-carriers, as we called the reactionaries, hissed, among other passages, an unnecessary and unfortunate phrase about a member of the Bourbon family running after an omnibus (presumably the chariot of state), and being told that there was no room for him. But far more fatal than the cabal, which had been foreseen and denounced beforehand by the Republican press, was the deadly dullness of Paul Delair and his "poetry." This proved more than even the popularity of the novel could overcome.

There was an amusing incident connected with this disaster. The curtain had just fallen upon the third act. There had been a few cat-calls and hisses. Constant Coquelin, in a vile temper, was striding up and down behind the scenes, wearing that portentous air which he reserved for solemn occasions. He was evidently conjuring up the dangers which menaced the Republic, Gambetta and Delair. Suddenly he caught sight of a timid looking, dark man skulking behind the scenery. There could be no doubt about it—the creature must be a spy, in the pay of the Right, stationed there to give the signals for the hostile demonstrations. "Now see what will happen!" exclaimed Coquelin to Alphonse Daudet, and he dashed upon the intruder as though intending to rend him limb from limb. "Who are you, and what are you doing here?" Taken by surprise, the "conspirator" managed to stammer out:—"Please, sir, they sent me over from Voisin's restaurant to know how many you will have at supper."

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[1] "At the moment when, to succour him, a wall of the Bastille rose from the earth, I dashed forward clanging my cymbals. Each word of mine was like a cannon-ball, and everything came crashing down."

The supper was but a dreary repast. Everyone tried in vain to find something cheering to say to poor Delair, who looked like a suicide just fished out of a well, and to Coquelin, who resembled Napoleon the night after Waterloo. My father, always a believer in looking things straight in the face, declared, "It's a failure; let's admit that now, and have it over with." But his collaborator shook his head sadly. It was a victory for the Opposition. Behind the club-carriers all the powers of darkness were massing for an attack on the reforms of the great Revolution, which they hoped to overthrow as they had destroyed the career of this play in five acts in verse. But I did not believe then, nor do I believe now, in the potency of conspiracies or cabals.

The next day, Jean Coquelin was waiting for me anxiously in the court-yard of Louis-le-Grand. "It was a failure," I told him, "an utter failure." Tears stood in his eyes. He was overcome with disappointment. But he looked so much like his father, with just the same expression on just the same features, that (I am ashamed to say) I nearly burst out laughing.

The revival of Victor Hugo's "Le Roi s'Amuse" was, in its way, an equally complete "frost." This melodrama in verse had been banned previously by the censor's office, and this made people expect a triumph. The Charpentiers found a seat for me in their box, and my heart beat violently as the curtain rose. Delibes had composed some delightful incidental music (chiefly based on old melodies, notably "La Romanesca.") The stage settings were rich, the costumes very sumptuous, but two rôles very badly acted—"Triboulet," by Got, and "Saint-Vallier," by Maubant—revealed the fundamental weakness and artificiality of the play.

Poor old Maubant never had a diction suitable for anything but farce. Besides, he was an extraordinarily pompous man, and delivered his gestures at the wrong moments. Consequently, the father of Diane de Poitiers gave one the impression of a madman escaped from the asylum *en chemise*. During his most important speech the audience giggled—this in spite of the respect which everyone felt for Hugo who, so it was reported, was present in one of the stage boxes. A great demonstration in his honour had been planned for the end of the play. Catulle Mendès, his hair all rumpled with excitement, went about in the corridors declaring he would pull the ears and the nose of anyone who would dare to deny that the play was the one and only masterpiece, the marvel of marvels, of French dramatic art. Vacquerie [1] and Meurice backed him up, but less belligerently—the former by shaking that long face of his, that looked like the visage of an ill-tempered horse, while the latter nodded his benevolent old white top-piece, his features all screwed up into the expression of some good dame who has lately taken a powerful purge. Sarcey, in the front row of the balcony, was busy picking his nose. The intimates of the avenue d'Eylau filled the stage boxes to overflowing. Among them figured that rascal of a Lockroy, later a prominent politician. But, in view of the chilliness of the audience, they too, like Coquelin at "Les Rois en Exil," were forced to talk about "a hostile cabal." This they did without much conviction, it was so obviously untrue. But I can still hear Émile Augier, tall and well set up, with a prominent nose that seemed to have been carved out of mahogany, declaring loudly, "Got was perfect!" Perfect, doubtless, in some of Augier's own plays. He knew how to portray middle-class characters, but he acted Triboulet, the jester at the court of Francis I, with the same diction and gestures he used in the leading part in "Les Effrontés." He kept fidgeting his head, making little circular gestures with his arms, performing tremolos with his legs, and mumbling his alexandrines indistinctly. When Triboulet menaces the Vicomte d'Aubusson, Got seemed to be saying to his pipe, "Now then, if you don't behave properly I'll leave you at home the next time I go out." He did not know what to do with his jester's staff, and he dragged about clumsily a badly made club foot. At one moment his artificial calves slipped around to the front of his legs, and his hump worked down between his hips. The obvious amusement of the audience first annoyed him, and then exasperated him. "Not only does the King dishonour my daughter, damn him, but the spectators dare to make fun of *me,* the unhappy father," he seemed to be thinking. As a result he thoroughly messed up the last act, shaking his tragic sack with the air of a dissatisfied coal-heaver, and rattling off his lines at full speed, obviously in a hurry to get the thing over with.

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[1] Auguste Vacquerie, playwright. His brother married Hugo's daughter. (Translator's note.)

It was a complete disaster, so much so that the prepared ovation in honour of Hugo was called off. The old master, fallen into a sort of sublime second childhood, drove away in a hired carriage, followed by a few faint cheers. Mendès, having found nobody whose ears or nose he could pull in honour of the Muses, departed, accompanied by his latest light-of-love, a female with a dreadful face like a skull, to get drunk at the nearest saloon. People felt, that night, that the Romantics had suffered a severe defeat. The saying was "Le roi s'amuse, mais il est seul." [1]

The truth of the matter is that Hugo's plays are the most feeble part of his writings. He was highly gifted as a lyric poet, but not as a playwright, and his dramas are full of fine-sounding speeches but are without backbone. On top of what he remembered of Shakespeare he plastered some highly coloured and violently contrasted climaxes and characters—such as the virtuous highwayman, the court jester who is obsessed by the ideas of Pascal and Bossuet, the servant who loves the Queen, old die-hards becoming mouldy in their ancestral homes. Nothing is real in these coloured prints, nor have they any historical, political or psychological meaning. Here and there, as in the last act of "Hernani," you will find a beautiful fragment, but it is a violin solo performed on the tomb of a great mistake. Nowhere more clearly than in Hugo's plays may one see the enormous disproportion that existed between his intellectual capacity and his purely verbal powers. In him the wings of an eagle served to give flight to a mere sparrow.

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[1] "The King is enjoying himself, but he's the only one who is."

The eightieth birthday of the Grand Old Man took place at about the same time as the revival of "Le Roi s'Amuse." An interminable procession, men of letters, politicians and idlers, passed beneath the windows of his house in the avenue d'Eylau. They could catch just a glimpse of the hero, his face dominated by his vast forehead. He stood near a window and held his little grandson Georges by the hand. In spite of the weather, which was chilly, the window was opened for a minute or two, and a great cheer went up. A delegation of school-children were brought in and recited the verses written by that old lecher of a Mendès—so well qualified to express juvenile candour and innocence!

Elsewhere, the sun of the Romantics had set completely. This was especially true as far as my generation was concerned. The class in philosophy at Louis-le-Grand in 1884 provided a very fair cross-section of the state of mind of the young men of our day, fourteen years after the Franco-Prussian war. For professor we had the well-known Burdeau.[1] At that time we admired him sincerely, with all the fervour of those who are just entering upon the study of metaphysics, believing in his sense of honour and in his patriotism, and benefiting from the clearness of his explanations. He was already a politician; he would interrupt an analysis of the "Critique of Pure Reason" to deliver a eulogy on Gambetta or Freycinet. He delivered these diatribes in a fervent and convincing manner that seemed entirely sincere. On certain anniversaries of the "Année Terrible" he would read to us appropriate selections, frequently taken from Alphonse Daudet's "Contes de Lundi" or "Lettres à un Absent." In the great hall on the ground flour hung a portrait of Burdeau as the national *prix d'honneur* man; it was said that this prize had gained for him the aid of the financier Donon.

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[1] Burdeau took part in politics and became President of the Chamber of Deputies. He was implicated in the Panama scandals, was convicted and served a prison term for taking a bribe. (Translator's note.)

Our professor was always talking about integrity, unselfishness, self-sacrifice, democracy. He was a positive glutton for work. In three days he would correct our compositions, and our exercises within twelve hours. They came back to us bristling with notes that were always useful and sometimes remarkable. I was, as the prize lists will testify, one of the two or three boys he considered especially worthy of his notice. He deigned to favour us with personal smiles, from underneath his eye-glasses and above his short black beard, and he would occasionally make little side remarks to us.

This son of a Lyons silk weaver appeared to us, after a series of years devoted to Latin, Greek, French literature, and mathematics, as the personification of abstract reason, the pilot who would bring us safely to the Fortunate Isles of transcendental subjectivity. Not, by any means, that Burdeau despised Herbert Spencer or the translation of Spencer by the worthy Cazelles. In accordance with the official program of the courses, he saturated us conscientiously with the writings of that unsuccessful biologist (for whom the theory of evolution was an article of faith) from the "First Principles" to the "Principles of Sociology." Burdeau also inflicted on us Alexander Bain's "The Emotions and the Will," John Stuart Mill and his memoirs, his own translation of Schopenhauer (that perfect type of the congenital misanthrope always on the verge of general paralysis), and all the worm-eaten books of Alfred Fouillée. Besides these, we had the works of the conceited, dogmatic and empty Ribot and the "Irréligion de l'Avenir" by Guyau, which did so much harm to an entire generation. He analyzed marvellously the "Ethics" of Spinoza, the "Monadology" of Leibnitz, Descartes' "Discours de la Méthode" and "Traité des Passions." But his great idol, his bulwark and his refuge, was Emmanuel Kant. He gave us to understand that Kant had descended further than any other human being into the abysses of the mind, he was the pioneer, the "wanderer," whom Richard Wagner had glorified. The professor entrusted to Chavannes, one of my classmates (now professor at the Collège de France), the task of analyzing for us the "Prolegomena," which contains the essence of the "Critique of Pure

Reason" and the "Metaphysics of Morals," the "Liebig's extract" of "The Practical Reason." Burdeau never exclaimed as did Chabrier, our professor in rhetoric, when he read us Virgil, "What a shame! What a shame! The idea of offering such a masterpiece to these young idiots!" He did imply, however, that three years of study and meditation were none too much if we hoped to reach the outer threshold of Kantian learning.

I have realized since then that Burdeau was profoundly, ardently anti-clerical. The destructive criticism of Kant appealed to him especially as a weapon of scepticism. In the course of the entire scholastic year he never once mentioned the name of Saint-Thomas Aquinas, and when he spoke to us of the Deity (a thing which happened rarely), he added immediately, lifting his finger as he did so, "I am speaking of the sentiment of the Divinity in itself considered as a state of consciousness, not the Divinity at it is worshipped by the churches." This impressed us as being very subtle. We were not irreligious—at least, not those who, like myself, had been brought up as Catholics—but yet we felt that the dogmas regarding faith and philosophy were not compatible with the range of metaphysics. Did not our teacher himself tell us, banging a solid fist on his desk to drive home his point, "The 'categorical imperative' is sufficient"?

Burdeau's lectures were filled to so great an extent with political and anti-religious allusions that Gidel, the head of the school, heard of it, and remonstrated with him, on several occasions, in a way that displeased him. None of his pupils was shocked, however. Had not Emmanuel Kant himself changed the course of his daily walk in order to obtain earlier news regarding the progress of the French Revolution? Such being the case, anyone who spoke ill of the Republic, which was the offspring of that Revolution, must be a reactionary person, deaf to all new ideas.

During the recesses we used to stroll up and down the courtyard. The same boys always kept together. In the group headed by Gabriel Syveton one was sure to find Couyba, who has since become minister under various premiers, senator, and member of the government party whatever may be the complexion of that party. Poor

Syveton, he already had his air of reserve, his piercing glance, his loud laugh. Since then he and I have spoken many a time of Burdeau's philosophy classes. I could never have foreseen that he, of all men, would one day enter Death's realm by the grisly door of political assassination.

As another of my class-mates who has passed away, I must mention Marcel Schwob, already full of learning but contemptuous of the curriculum and preferring to play truant though it cost him immediate success. A polyglot Jew, Schwob spoke English and German fluently, and read Kant in the original. This should have attracted Burdeau; nevertheless, he overlooked Schwob. Nor must I forget to mention Paul Claudel, the playwright who is more difficult to understand than any of his contemporaries, but also the one whose work is the richest in novel and striking metaphors. Claudel, who was marked by a fiery glance and rapid diction, had frequent tilts with our teacher. Like all other good Jacobins or "liberals," Burdeau disliked being contradicted. I fancy he was also aware of the fact that Claudel was only a very lukewarm admirer of the "categorical imperative." Hence these clashes, as rapid and brilliant as a fencing bout, which left the antagonists irritated and on edge. As you can see, the classes in "Philosophy B" were by no means ordinary.

Alphonse Daudet was right when he maintained that German metaphysics played an important part in the crippling of French intelligence between 1880 and 1895. Those were fifteen years of what our neighbours would call *sturm und drang.* All the more strange is it that this infiltration was encouraged as a form of patriotism. We were informed that it was necessary—indeed, absolutely essential—to know intimately the race that had conquered us, to submit to those forms of mental discipline from across the Rhine that contained, according to Burdeau and the others, the secret of their recent successes.

The result of this forced diet of evolutionist and Kantian doctrines, stuffed down our throats by a politican disguised as an apostle (and whom we admired), was moral and mental anarchy. "The Unconscious Self," by Hartmann, and the works of Schopenhauer, which we eagerly read and discussed, combined with Kant to overcome our national common sense and those traditions of method and moderation which we had inherited from our forebears. Our attack of "inflammation of the brain," as Renan has called it, detached us from all forms of religious belief, and the sham patriotism of Burdeau did not compensate us for what we had lost. The years have not effaced the painful memory of this invasion of my mind by Germanic fallacies. The latter affected deeply all my opinions and decisions until the days of the Dreyfus affair. Repeatedly I tried to shake them off, but they quickly regained their hold. My medical studies which, after all, are comparatively superficial, did not succeed in dissipating them; indeed, quite the contrary was the case. I believed that in taking up my medical work I was escaping from the scientific materialism of which it is really a powerful ally. I declare my opinion deliberately, here and now, that the doctrines of Kant are a poison to the French brain. They benumb it and paralyze it. Every French father who desires to pass on the torch of his race to his sons in the most favorable conditions, should shield them from these doctrines. He should not let his sons remain ignorant of them, but he should point out the poison they contain.

I believe in the development of the individual by definite stages. Until he is ten, the child is a sage, a wise little person. Those who protest against the first communion at the age of seven prove by their protest that they know nothing about little children—those pure and sane beings so ready at that age to receive the revelation of the Diety. From ten to seventeen (or a little later, depending upon the individual) the adolescent is essentially governed by his sexual sensations. He is a sexualist, and this expression shows in which direction lie the most terrible dangers, those which may wreck his entire after life. This is the period of unhealthy fancies, reinforced by too violent sensual attractions that threaten to become habits. Question the debauchee or the pervert. He will confess that his vice goes back to some unhealthy fancy which he cherished during his adolescent years, to contact with some evil personality, to some unsound influence entering his life during this period—which is, in truth, a most critical one. Between eighteen and twenty we find a taste for abstract, metaphysical research. It is as though the brain, before beginning to gather the fruits of experience, wished to take its general bearings, to study its own possibilities and limitations. A false theory, a paradoxical doctrine, encountered at this period, may prove as dangerous as an unclean picture in the preceding stage. Beware of those who win prizes for philosophic theses prepared under the auspices of a republican government!

At Louis-le-Grand, one of my school fellows in one of Burdeau's classes, a young man, healthy, extremely intelligent and of good family, told me one evening that he had decided to kill himself "because the world was inherently evil." Some instinct prompted me to report this, which was not yet perhaps even a decision, not to our professor, but to the headmaster. The attitude of Gidel as I told my tale was a singular one. He was both affected and perplexed. Later he called the pessimist into his office, gave him a talking to, and sent him back to his family for a few days. On his return he was entirely cured. This incident shows to what degree a young man may take philosophic theories seriously, and how important it is that he have some firm foundation beneath their shifting quicksands.

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The illness and death of Gambetta did not greatly affect the Parisians. They were merely inquisitive about the sentimental complications which had brought about the revolver shot and the resulting intestinal inflammation in this full-blooded individual. It was his prominence that caused Gambetta's death. Lannelongue would have operated on a person less in the public eye. But where a Gambetta was concerned he hesitated, refrained from intervening, and let unkind Nature take her course. When anyone spoke to Professor Charcot about the sudden demise he would sigh and say, "They took admirable care—of the wound." In other words, Charcot believed the patient's general constitution had been somewhat neglected. Everyone was aware of the circumstances in which the accident occurred. It was during a quarrel with his mistress, Madame Léonie Léon, who threatened to commit suicide, that

Gambetta snatched the revolver from the woman's hands. The weapon went off, and the bullet, according to some versions, pierced the abdomen and brought on an inflammation. Another account said that the wound was only skin-deep. In any case, the victim was ordered to keep quiet, to avoid exercise, and this prescription resulted in obstruction of the bowels. His lieutenants, headed by Étienne, divided the spoils. Coquelin the elder wept real tears; so did his son Jean, of whom I have already spoken. Crêpe floated from the Palais-Bourbon, but there was no popular outburst of grief. Several months previously, at Belleville, Democracy had informed her fat, one-eyed puppet that she had tired of him and was betaking herself elsewhere, bag and baggage. Nevertheless, no one, in those days (except perhaps Madame Edmond Adam) knew what was going on behind the scenes, nor anything about that pretended "next war," that "revenge" on Germany of which Gambetta talked. No one guessed then that this was a sham, and that Bismarck was Gambetta's accomplice and partner. To-day, thanks to irrefutable testimony and incontrovertible documents collected by Bainville and de Roux, we know the facts.

It was different when Hugo died. He was old, he was a grandfather, he was a poet, he had been an exile. At the first news of his illness, crowds gathered at the avenue d'Eylau. Germain Sée, the Jewish physician, was there, going in and out, looking very solemn, his enormous head hunched between his shoulders. Lockroy bustled about amid a flock of minor government officials whom their chiefs had sent to get the latest news. The Republic's grandfather lay dying. What was really genuine and touching was the grief of Hugo's grandchildren. They passionately loved their "papapa," as they called him, and they wept unrestrainedly, without regard for official etiquette or social conventions. To them Hugo was not merely famous; he was, most of all, someone who loved them, doted on them, spoiled them. He did all this with a simple sincerity which that little dwarf of a Rostand should have copied. Hugo was affected and pompous in public, but he was different at home; there he laid aside that grandiloquent manner of his which is so exasperating in his prefaces and his manifestoes.

For a week I did not leave my friend Georges Hugo, whose proud, precocious nature suffered keenly from the intrusions of officialdom and politics into his private grief. He proved this by remaining constantly indoors. Lockroy, Hugo's son-in-law, had as usual only one idea—how to impress his political supporters. The mournful manner in which he received delegations from his election district was most amusing to those who knew his real feelings toward the patriarch; an old man, who also happens to be a genius, is a cumbersome piece of furniture to have around the house. He has his own habits, his own friends, and his own train of retainers and hangers-on. Nevertheless, it was necessary that Lockroy should appear grief-stricken, on account of the next elections. So, although he chuckled to himself as he sat in his study with his eternal cigar between his lips, he was ready to turn himself into a watering can the moment a visitor appeared. I can see him now, with those great round eyes of his filled with moisture at will, conducting Jules Claretie, the dramatist and later manager of the Théâtre Français, and all the prominent politicians of the day, to the room in which the body was lying. There he would strike an attitude, his thin arms crossed over his hollow stomach, and shake dolefully his head of hair, already white, as though he had lost everything on earth that he cared about. His associates seized him by both hands, and, looking equally distressed, repeated insistently, "You will be sick yourself if you are not careful; try to go out and get a little fresh air." Lockroy's only reply was, "No, no, no," as he lifted his eyes to the ceiling and called on his secretaries to testify to the ocean of sorrow which overwhelmed him. Between times he refused insolently—still having in mind his electorate—to receive the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, and organized that non-religious apotheosis under the Arch of Triumph which turned into such a saturnalia. The exploiting of corpses for political purposes is one of the traditions of the Republic.

Zola, anxious that his name should not be overlooked amid all this clamour around a death-bed, wrote an amazingly presumptuous letter to Georges Hugo in which the "I's" sounded like a fanfare of trumpets. He said, "Some day you will perhaps know, Sir, that even where your grandfather was concerned I maintained the authority of criticism." It ended, of course, with a phrase about "the complete triumph of literary genius." The true meaning of all this was, "Hugo, at last is dead; long live Zola!" Hugo used to say of the creator of the Rougon-Macquarts, "Until he has described in detail the contents of a choked-up latrine, Zola will not have accomplished anything." This ambition was fulfilled. The novelist's works contain several specimens of such first-hand observations.

The poets, headed by Catulle Mendès, announced their intention of keeping watch beside the body of him who had been their master. I was present. Besides the overexcitable Jew, Paul Arène, there were Jean Aicard, Émile Blémont and a few others who shared the vigil. They installed themselves around the bed where lay at rest the remains of the mighty inventor of rhythms and metaphors. For about an hour the disciples remained respectfully silent, but in the next hour they began to chat with one another. This was natural enough. Indeed, unless you pray, and if you believe that life ends with the last breath, the last heart beat, it is difficult to sit and twiddle your thumbs silently throughout such a session. Death without the ministrations of the Church is without dignity. It becomes a purely administrative function, a sum in mathematical physiology, a subtraction in terms of the flesh. So-and-so existed; he exists no longer. That leaves one man less on earth. Whose turn comes next? Mendès began, in a low voice, but speaking very carefully—he had already had a couple of absinthes or vermouths—to tell stories about black magic, about dead people who suddenly came to life and talked, about communications from beyond the grave. "Ah, but listen to what happened next! The curious thing was that the same woman in the same white dress appeared to Richard Wagner a few years later. She had in her hand the same portrait. Villiers de l'Isle-Adam saw her, too. Now, isn't that really very wonderful?" Émile Blémont listened and wept. Aicard, who was becoming more and more gloomy and more and more worn out, looked at himself looking at Hugo, and compared the two.

At this moment Lockroy appeared again. He had resumed his mournful air, and nodded his head sorrowfully. He was accompanied by Léopold Hugo, shy and gentle, with his vast forehead and his large eyes, looking more than ever like his "dear uncle" thirty years before. The poet's nephew had with him an easel, a canvas and a box of paints. He announced that he was going to paint a portrait of the deceased. He added, with a troubled air, "Unfortunately I have no gold powder, so I shall leave the laurel wreath in white." He settled himself at the foot of the bed, whence the old man's countenance was to be seen full face, and began, most attentively, to paint the picture. In spite of—or, rather, on account of—the solemnity of the occasion, the spectators felt a terrific desire to laugh. They bit their lips, they cracked their finger joints, they pinched themselves, they held their heads between their hands as one does when one has a toothache—all in order to restrain their mirth. Placid and serene as the man in the moon, Léopold continued his work. What appeared on the canvas was altogether frightful. It was a sort of shrivelled image of Julius Cæsar, that had not the slightest resemblance to the "dear uncle." Lockroy, his hands in his pockets, stared, ironically, at this insane production. Finally, the ordeal proved more than the poets could stand. One by one they rose and filed out to the staircase, leaving the too highly inspired artist alone with his model.

"How about a drink?" suggested Mendès, adding, mysteriously, "The café across the street has stayed open, in spite of its being so late. And yet I haven't seen a single person go in, or even a waiter. Now, isn't that extraordinary?" This phenomenon, which Virgil has omitted from his list of those apparitions which accompany the death of a hero, appealed to Paul Arène, who was a night hawk and always thirsty. The rest of us followed them. Reaching the café (which no longer exists, all that portion of the avenue d'Eylau having been built up into magnificent private houses), we were able at last to give way to our mirth. Aicard and Mendès giggled in front of the mirror, fixing their disordered hair like women in a brothel when their clients have just gone. "My dear, it was just too funny for anything!" The owner of the café brought us some drinks, rubbing his eyes as he did so. Toward morning a fly appeared, attracted by the glasses and the bottles. Mendès, growing more and more mystical, insisted that it was really a bee—very likely a reincarnation of Hugo's soul, come back to be with his spiritual children. By that time Mendès had become shockingly, disgustingly drunk, livid in the face and foul of breath, but he insisted on reciting bits of "Les Châtiments" and "La Légende des Siècles."

When, on the following day, I read in the papers an account of this wake, which had become, thanks to well-trained reporters, a sort of funeral libation in the manner of Plato, I realized the part which the printed lie plays in contemporary life.

On the Place de l'Étoile, two nights later, the profanation became still greater. The catafalque had been placed under the arch itself, and was guarded by detachments of cavalry and police. The hall in the interior of one of the pillars had been reserved for the family. Lockroy did the honors, having eliminated the closest relatives, among them Georges Hugo. In full evening dress, with a white necktie, he greeted the deputies, the senators, the civic authorities and the members of the press, and received their expressions of condolence. His great object had been so to arrange matters that neither Vacquerie nor Meurice should have a place of honour or be in any way prominent on the day of the funeral itself, when the body was to be taken to the Pantheon. He hated them cordially, for reasons which I learned later. Lockroy wished to emphasize the fact that it was he who had conceived and arranged all the details of the funeral; in the minds of the politicians, it was to be a model for all future similar events. They said repeatedly, "The people enjoy ceremonies; those of the Republic must be brilliant ones." This one degenerated into a positive orgy.

I do not remember who was the chief of police at this time, nor will I look it up, as I purposely avoid referring to contemporary records. They would influence my personal recollections, in spite of myself. At any rate, whoever was supposed to keep order lost his head, probably on account of the novelty of the occasion. No proper precautions were taken and, consequently, all sorts of undesirable characters assembled and were allowed to carouse in a disgusting manner, almost beside the coffin itself. The dregs of the underworld made merry under the indulgent eye of the police. The scum of so-called society, of the clubs and night restaurants, came here and mixed with the offscourings of the gutter. These fine gentlemen and ladies fraternized with the "tough guys" and their "skirts," drank out of the same bottles, joined in the choruses of the same indecent songs, drank with them, quarreled with them, vomited with them. The "brotherhood of man," as one saw it on the "great nights" of the Revolution, must have been something like this scene. The admirers of Hugo, sick at heart, abandoned the spot where the festivities, which were a national disgrace, were taking place.

At last the day of the funeral arrived. It was clear and warm. The first series of speeches was delivered at the Place de l'Étoile, before the body was placed on the hearse. Charles Floquet, looking like a lawyer's clerk who tries to resemble Mirabeau and Robespierre simultaneously, posed pretentiously on the speakers' stand. Lockroy quoted to us Gambetta's description, "Floquet is a turkey gobbler with a peacock's feather stuck in his tail." The only man who struck the proper note was Émile Augier, very "upper middle class." He stood up very straight, and announced in resounding tones: "This is not a —(I forget what);—this is a day of consecration." Then the band of the Garde Républicaine attacked Chopin's Funeral March, the least beautiful, the most theatrical, of all such compositions. Slowly the immense procession got under way behind that paupers' hearse which the millionaire poet had ostentatiously insisted upon having. Immediately behind came Georges Hugo, walking by himself. Back of him crowded in confusion the intimate friends of the family, persons who were in the habit of going to Hugo's house (I was among them), government officials, cabinet ministers, poets, writers and journalists. Delegations from various societies closed the procession. Some of these were very strange indeed, carrying banners with curious inscriptions mostly of Masonic origin, and representing groups of freethinkers in Paris and the suburbs. Hugo had declared in his bombastic will that while he "rejected the orisons of all the churches, he implored the prayers of all mankind." Included, presumably, among the latter, were the representatives of a hilarious dinner-club, known as the "Beni-Bouffe

Toujours," who made their first appearance on this occasion and aroused much mirth. Not only did the crowds pack the sidewalks, but the windows were crammed as well, and there were spectators perched on the roofs of the houses all along the line of march. The various celebrities came in for special attention. There was Nacquet, the politician famous for his law on divorce, like an obscene spider, humpbacked and hirsute, with crab-like gait. He leaned on the arm of his faithful Lockroy. There were Sar Pelletan, the author and Rosicrucian, with his ochre-colored skin, shirtless and dirty, but wearing a shabby frock coat; Claretie, with his nose at half mast; and all the rest. The members of the Académie Française, some of them in their green uniforms, attracted amused interest, for the lower classes considered them to be especially learned. On the other hand, the spectators got the academicians and the professors of the faculties mixed; the latter were as brilliant in their yellow, blue and red robes as a flock of parrots. I am inclined to think that it was on this occasion Alphonse Daudet first conceived the idea of his novel, "L'Immortel." Zola insisted, as the leader of the Naturalists, that the head of that movement must accompany the leader of the Romantics to his grave. He kept going about from one group to another fishing for compliments on his letter to Georges Hugo. "I felt that I *thould* do that. Wathn't I right—hum, hum—wathn't I right?"

At the Pantheon there were speeches that were even more insignificant than those which had been delivered at the Arch of Triumph. Some of them were utterly absurd. Afterwards, to the strains of the very mediocre "Hymne à Victor Hugo," by Saint-Saëns (who, fortunately for himself, has written better things), the remains of the poet were finally borne to their last resting place, a chilly crypt where fame is symbolized by an echo which the caretaker calls upon you to admire. This cellar is a storage closet for republican and revolutionary celebrities who have served their turn. It is cold down there even in summer, and the hand, holding a torch, which emerges from the tomb of Jean-Jacques Rousseau seems like a piece of grisly humour, as though the author of "Les Confessions" were trying forever, and unsuccessfully, to give light to the writer of "Les Misérables."

At last, the ceremony was over. Everybody had a deep thirst. We—that is to say, my father, Zola, Goncourt and a few others—went across to the Café de la Rotonde, Place de l'Observatoire. It was there, after a few moments' silence, that Zola made the edifying remark: "That'th a big weight off my chetht. The old boy, down there in hith little houthe at the end of hith avenue, had been in my way ever thinth hith anniverthary. Now he'th out of my way for good. Don't you feel the thame way, Daudet?"

Alphonse Daudet replied smilingly that he didn't have just that feeling. "Ah, really, that'th curiouth! Ithn't it thrange the different way people feel!"

CHAPTER IV

Alphonse Daudet's Receptions—Life at Our Country Place—Pierre Loti, the Hyper-Sensitive—Zola's First Meeting with Whistler—Eugène Carrière.

ON Sunday mornings Alphonse Daudet was "at home" to his fellow authors, and to young writers who came to ask his help and advice. With him there was sure to be his faithful secretary and friend, Jules Ebner. They had met first while on outpost duty during the siege of Paris. Ebner's loyalty formed part of our family traditions. He was clear-sighted and honest, and difficult to deceive where his employer's interests were at stake. Moreover, he was extremely quiet, modest and kindly, and was seldom in error in his likes and dislikes.

If I were to catalogue all those who were in the habit of coming regularly to our Sunday receptions, a volume hardly would be sufficient, so I will mention only some of the more prominent.

Abel Hermant was very faithful in his attendance. His first book, dealing with the École Normale, had just appeared, and was attracting a certain amount of attention. Nature endowed him with a physique that has not altered in thirty years. Picture to yourself a small, smooth, varnished automaton, with round features, glittering eyes and a little rigid smile between long blonde mustaches. His affected and nasal voice accentuates comically the last syllables of words in "an" or "en." He is forever telling, at great length, stories about professors, publishers and editors, in which he plays the principal part. In my day I have heard many persons talk about themselves, their characters and their actions, but never have I met anyone else who seemed so thoroughly satisfied with himself as is little Hermant. He possesses a certain amount of knowledge, and a dry, tidy, little talent, like that of the second-rate authors of the eighteenth century, semi-licentious and semi-perverted; he falls somewhere between Laclos and Restif. But there is so great a distance between his gifts and his own opinion of them that, when you see him and hear him, you are tempted to laugh. What strange little jumping jacks Nature can make, when she has a mind to!

I can never believe that Hermant is of the earth, earthy. He is a little man from the moon who fell to earth one frosty night with a pocketful of manuscripts. Since then his actions, gestures and remarks have all been governed by some invisible, mysterious clockwork. How often have I sought to discover the key that winds him up! I have looked for it in his figure, in his cold, hungry glances, in the heroes of his books, in his "Courpières" and his "Coutras" that followed his "Cruchod" and his "Rambosson," in the atmosphere of restlessness and uneasiness that surrounds him. A walking enigma, he wanders about and makes notes—not always very original—tells stories about himself with obvious pleasure, and others that deal with his neighbours, his acquaintances, the man who looks after his house, his landlord, his dog and his cat, involving them in situations that are entirely fictitious, and generally either disagreeable or licentious, but always improbable. There seems to be a screen between the real world and the one created by his pen—that pen which he tries so hard to make cruel and formidable. Certain savages living in countries where the soil is unwholesome stick their arrows into the ground to poison the tips, Abel (or Bebel, as we call him) dips his shafts into some moonshiny mixture which makes them harmless in spite of everything he can do.

The society folk he pictures as incestuous burglars, sellers of stolen jewels, murderers of their own children, and so on and so forth, continue to receive him at their houses without the least idea of the horrible crimes, the unnatural vices, which he attributes to them. He does all this, apparently, not in any spirit of unkindness, but simply because if one writes novels one must find something to put into them!

Only one of his books has caused a scandal, up to the present day. It was the one entitled "Le Cavalier Miserey." It was very dull. As luck would have it, however, it fell into the hands of a simple-minded colonel, who, it seems, was also kind-hearted. He had it burned publicly in the yard of the barracks—and made our Bebel famous!

Alphonse Daudet said to him one day, in my presence—the tone was paternal, but unforgettable—"My dear Hermant, when will you give me the pleasure of coming to see me, just once, without asking for something?"

Thanks to the unexpected auto-da-fé, "Le Cavalier Miserey" had a sale which none of his other books has ever equalled. Once I knew a fireworks manufacturer who used to murmur, as he looked at his store that was void of customers, "My bombs won't explode." Perhaps if Hermant, in a moment of literary frankness, would tell us just what is the key that sets his clockwork in motion, *his* bombs might explode. But even so I have my doubts.

In contrast with Hermant we have Hughes Le Roux, who was then, and has always remained, a charmer, in both appearance and conversation. He possesses remarkable gifts as a journalist which he has never exploited properly. His principal weakness was an imagination which carried him off his feet and caused him to invent, out of whole cloth, incidents that were very curious and entertaining and which he believed later had really taken place. Le Roux intoxicated himself with words—but he was so agreeable, so good-natured, that you could never be angry with him, even when you found out later the unreality of his visions. After having imagined, times innumerable, that he had achieved the conquest of Abyssinia, he actually ended by going there. I tremble when I think what extraordinary accounts of contemporary history and the state of Parisian society—further embellished, without doubt, by the interpreter—he must have left behind him in the hooded head of old never-say-die Menelik! He was well designed to while away the leisure hours of some grand vizier or pasha who would never check up on his tales. To such a potentate he would have presented the "Arabian Nights" as a little thing of his own, the scientific inventions of the last fifty years as the result of his own experiments, the sovereigns of Europe as his nephews, intimates and protégés. But let him beware lest the grand vizier or the pasha seek some day to verify his statements! When this occurs Le Roux risks losing his head—a thing little likely enough to happen with his present master, the high and mighty Lord Bunau-Varilla.

Jules Lemaître published about this time in the "Revue Bleue" his first criticisms of Renan and Georges Ohnet. They were tremendously talked about. All the young folks who were interested in literature hailed them as indicating a reappearance of the objective attitude in criticism which had disappeared since Sainte-Beuve's day, and they delighted in Lemaître's irony, which was as pointed, brilliant and flexible as a rapier. My father thoroughly enjoyed Lemaître. Whenever the latter entered the room, he would greet him with a friendly exclamation, an approving laugh. Their sense of humour was as much alike as was their point of view of serious problems. At Louis-le-Grand, where there were numerous advanced students interested in rhetoric and philosophy, the success of this first series of "Les Contemporains" was simply amazing. Professors, lecturers, pupils, everyone, knew them by heart. Persons not in touch with university circles would find it hard to understand the rapidity with which the flames spread. Both the literary world, deafened by the indecent brawlings of Zola and his followers, and the theatre, stifling under the weight of the pseudo-historic melodramas of Sardou and the paradoxical sentimentalizing of Dumas the younger, had been waiting for the advent of someone who would sit in judgment, would definitely put things in their place. The clear, captivating voice of Lemaître revived the common sense of his countrymen. It was a bell whose chimes were heard far and wide, a rallying note for persons of good taste, swept away by the flood of second-rate productions. Lemaître saw a good deal of Le Roux, and helped to guide him. He was as indulgent to the latter's inventions as was Alphonse Daudet. It is a curious thing that Le Roux has never poured out—or, if you prefer, sought to relieve—his imagination in works of pure fiction. In his case, the man has continued to be more interesting than his books.

Some months ago,[1] the fate which presides over political controversies caused me to fire four revolver shots at Paul Hervieu. This took place in the Parc-des-Princes on a lovely June morning.

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[1] This was written in 1913. (Translator's note.)

As my seconds were bringing me my weapons, I recalled—and I fancy Hervieu also remembered—our first meetings around the study table of Alphonse Daudet. As a youth, Hervieu was charming and elegant, but inclined to taciturnity—a trait which was becoming to him. He knew what he wanted, and he guided his career as a skilful horseman guides his steed. He was decidedly agreeable, for you felt that he was loyal, and steadfast in his friendships. Never a sycophant or a coxcomb, he was distinctly haughty, and not a person with whom one could take liberties. At our home he was one of the most popular of guests, one of those whose absence was always regretted. I have never been able to understand how he could stomach that Jewish clique, that society of Republican office-holders in which he lives, and also that contact with certain of his colleagues at the Académie Française of whose insipidity he must be aware. He had just published at Lemerre's "Les Yeux Vertes et les Yeux Bleus," and that strange tale, "L'Inconnu." When our duel began, I thought of all this as I was aiming at him. To be the first to hit the mark is, in a revolver duel, the only possible manner of parrying, but I thought, at the same time, that it would be most unpleasant either to wound Paul Hervieu or to be wounded by him. The first play of his to be produced was "Les Paroles Restent." It had an excellent subject and a very good title. When it had its premier, my father, already in poor health, and leaning heavily on my arm, went behind the scenes to shake Hervieu's hand and buoy up his courage. During the entire performance, in which Marthe Brandès was magnificent, Daudet trembled with mingled pleasure and fear, so keenly was he interested in Hervieu's success or failure. Such emotions on the part of a fellow-author seem to me to have become very rare nowadays. Moreover, the stage in Paris is not at all what it was twenty years ago. It has become debased, ruined by Jewish authors and such buffoons as Rostand and d'Annunzio. The plays alternate between highly spiced twaddle and sexual brutality, while their success is influenced by the tastes of foreign visitors and the manœuvres of ticket speculators.

In a very short time, the publication of Hervieu's novel, "Peints par Eux-Mêmes," in which the plot is developed in a series of letters, brought him into the first rank of contemporary writers. The searching correspondence has been compared to Laclos' "Les Liaisons Dangereuses." It lacks the perverseness of that psycho-physiological masterpiece, but nevertheless it is, as Alphonse Daudet declared, "a mighty good book."

I shall be brief in dealing with Marcel Prévost. He had published his "Le Scorpion" about this time, and was what he still is, a salesman. He sought, and always succeeded in finding, the type of merchandise, in the form of fiction, that best suited the season and the tastes of the crowd. Thus he managed to build up a clientèle which was numerous (indeed, it renewed itself frequently) but which was incapable of giving him any standing in literature. After having traded in immorality with "Les Demi-Vierges," Prévost handed out morality in "Les Vierges Fortes"—with the same indifference as a clerk displays who is transferred from ribbons to woolens. His looks are like his work, his conversation is non-existent, his friendliness is empty and without flavour. For Prévost is not even a fellow-writer whom one can dislike. He hands out his merchandise complacently, but at the same time casts venomous glances at anyone whom he suspects of not admiring his line of goods. That admiration for officialdom which surprises me on the part of Hervieu is to be expected from Marcel Prévost; indeed, it is characteristic. It forms part of his natural evolution, like his insignia as Commander of the Legion of Honour and his seat in the Académie Française. The position of the President of the Republic would fit Prévost like a glove; after that there would be the funeral at the expense of the state and burial in the Pantheon. Thus, step by step, does one mount the ladder to oblivion.

Some of the frequent visitors at our Sunday morning receptions met also on Thursday evenings either in our Paris house or at our country place at Champrosay. In Paris we lived successively at 24, rue Pavée, in the Marais quarter, 18, Place des Vosges, 3, avenue de l'Observatoire, and 41, rue de l'Université, where my father died on December 16, 1897. At Champrosay, the railway station for which is Ris-Orangis, we lived first at the extreme end of the village, towards Corbeil, in a villa with a studio that had belonged to Delacroix. Then we occupied the big white house, still standing on the top of the hill, and, finally, a large estate next to the church. The grounds fell away towards the Seine in a succession of lawns and terraces. There are few living French writers over forty who did not come at least once to Champrosay, therefore it is useless for me to attempt anything like a complete list. I have only to close my eyes to see pass before me, on the screen of memory, some of those faces I saw there so often. But not all of them were equally dear to me.

Our Thursday night dinners at Champrosay were less formal than those in Paris. In the first place, one never knew how many guests would turn up. Sometimes my mother would expect a dozen, and would have twenty or more descend upon her. Besides those from Paris, we had neighbours—like Drumont, who lives at Soisy, Larroumet, head of the École des Beaux Arts, from Villecresnes, Coppée, who spent the summer at Mandres, or Frédéric Masson, on a visit to his father-in-law, Monsieur Cottin. Those who lived near us would drop in and swell the number of diners. It was all very entertaining. The host would put aside his unfinished page, would conquer his almost constant aches and pains and, with his little pipe in hand and a rug on his knees if the autumn evening was chilly, would extend an affectionate greeting to each arrival. He inquired how everyone's work was getting along, and he knew how to avoid dangerous subjects. Coppée would help him in this. I see Coppée, rolling a cigarette, as he stood beside his sister Mademoiselle Annette, who had his mocking glance, a little of his biting tone, and a heart of gold. No other poet has ever been so profoundly and sincerely a city man as was Coppée, so utterly indifferent to the countryside, the woods, the fields and the streams. You felt that even among his roses at Mandres he was homesick for the Luxembourg Gardens and the Café de Fleurus. He used to declare that until he was over eighteen he believed potatoes sprouted in little hard, golden slices already fried, and that he was unable to tell the difference between young asparagus and a bean plant. He used to tease Drumont about his love of nature which, Coppée declared, his friend got out of books, whereas, as a matter of fact, the famous publicist sincerely enjoyed the out-of-doors and solitude.

"Look here, Drrrrrumont, don't try to tell me you know anything about things in the country. The Parisians of our day are twenty before they get a glimpse of any grass except what grows on the slopes of the fortifications. You've got to admit that's so, Drrrrrumont."

The author of "Mon Vieux Paris" would reply with a laugh, as he tapped the toes of his shiny riding boots with the tip of his crop. He rode horseback daily, and came to see us by way of the Forest of Sénart, taking the longest way round, as he tells so charmingly in his "La Dernière Bataille." Sometimes, at nightfall, I would go ahead of Drumont, and ambush him on the road to Soisy, dashing out unexpectedly with cries of "Vivent les Juifs!" But, as everyone knows, Drumont is not easily startled, and fear and he were not born the same day. As for Masson, the latter had just begun to publish the first of his volumes on Napoleon; "Madame Sans-Gêne" and Marbot's "Mémoirs" were very much the fashion—but no one thought of the Académie Française for the son-in-law of our agreeable neighbour, Monsieur Cottin. The latter had been under secretary in the days of the Empire, and Masson was at one time secretary to fat, good natured and disloyal "Plon-plon." [1] Moreover, Masson was an anti-clerical democrat, a friend of Sainte-Beuve, a secret but persistent supporter of the court of the Tuileries. He was, besides, the esteemed adviser of good-for-nothing Victor Napoleon,[2] and intimate friend of Princess Mathilde,[3] her dear Popelin and all the other official débris of that adventure which ended at Sedan. His writings were already marked by a certain highly flavoured ill-humour and nervous vigour. He was a glutton for work. He had rosy cheeks, heavy mustache, and hair slightly grey, and he walked about with long strides, sniffing the air, grumbling at people and things, and telling stories which were generally either scandalous or shocking. He was endowed with a gloomy imagination. You would catch vehement fragments such as "Just fancy, that atrocious Freycinet." . . . "I said to her, 'Madame, you are a hussy.' " . . . "The general died of rage after having betrayed not only his country but also His Majesty, the Emperor and King."

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[1] Napoléon-Joseph-Charles-Paul Bonaparte (1822-1891).

[2] Son of Prince Jerome Bonaparte, nephew of the Princess Mathilda.

[3] Daughter of Jerome Bonaparte, and cousin of Napoleon III.

Masson always referred to the victim of his thirty volumes, the late Bonaparte, as His Majesty, the Emperor and King. At that time we were not yet able to judge him properly. He was admittedly crotchety but original, and the enormous task which he had undertaken had not yet become a sort of libelous and especially misogynic scriptomania that swamped his accuracy as an historian. Unhappy Masson, who emptied into the biography of the Emperor all his own fault-finding, his bitterness, his mistrust of those about him, all the bile and evil juices secreted in his too full-blooded system! His writings are the product of the workings of his digestive system and the changing movements of his humours. He used the Corsican as a sledgehammer with which to crush his own enemies and the eternal Circe—woman.

Masson was a cousin by marriage of the Goncourts. He always spoke of Edmond de Goncourt as "Monsieur Edmond." When he happened to talk about something else than his Napoleonomania, it was generally either a reminiscence of that pasty-faced but pro-consular "Plon-plon" or a discussion of some of those recipes of which he always had a number on hand. He has been described, with fair accuracy, as a cannibal who knew good cooking. The members of his family, on their death beds, solemnly communicate to their heirs the recipe for a special kind of vinegar which is, I am told, simply marvellous.

To know Masson really, you should have seen him at home in the rue de la Baume, doing the honours of his collection. For thirty years, he collected all sorts of bibelots having to do with the First Empire and the "Man of Destiny," the "Little Corporal," in every conceivable costume from the grey frock coat to the canvas suit worn at Saint Helena. For thirty years, with an insane persistence that marked his brow with half a dozen parallel furrows, Frédéric Masson arranged and rearranged, labelled and dusted five or six thousand little figures of the First Consul and Emperor portrayed on snuff-boxes, fans, ink-pots, sugar-tongs, pen-holders, opera glasses. The careless servant who let a little cocked hat in bronze fall, or broke off a fold of the historic coat reproduced in china, received short shrift. He was thrown into outer darkness, and roundly cursed into the bargain. Every time a visitor called, whether a respectful Frenchman or a foreigner eager to acquire knowledge, Masson, after a meal flavored by the famous vinegar, would take him firmly by the arm and carry him off to the famous gallery. There the host did not spare his victim a single item, and in the case of certain objects there would be a stereotyped story, told every time in exactly the same words, like a guide's description in a museum. I have known old men, animated by the best intentions, to be obliged to plead for mercy on account of the fatigue of their aged limbs, and women who almost fainted before the ordeal was over. Ruthless, without pity on their suffering, the insatiable Napoleonomaniac continued his lecture.

Out of doors Masson was less dangerous. I never happened to go to Asnières-sur-Oise, where Masson performed, punctiliously, the duties of a Napoleonic mayor, but he used to ask Coppée there regularly. The latter was always delighted with the famous vinegar. Where I did see something of Masson was at the restaurant of the "Vieux Garçon," at Morsang-sur-Seine. *Matelote* of eels with wine and onions was served there in a way that was not to be despised, and leg of mutton with beans was cooked according to the proper canons of the culinary art. There were no automobiles in those days, and we drove over to Morsang in several carriages. Drumont on horseback frequently joined us. Naturally, if you sat near Masson you were obliged to hear all about Marmont, Moreau, Pichegru, Malet and the other celebrities of the First Empire, followed by Persigny, Le Flo, Trochu and the Duc de Morny, of the days of Napoleon III. But, happily, the view of the hills along the Seine, especially delightful in the Fall, diverted your attention from these imperialistic anecdotes, and you knew that the food to be set before you at the "Vieux Garçon" was delectable. Moreover, my father knew the way to keep human a conversation that showed signs of becoming too exclusively historical, and Edmond de Goncourt, "Monsieur Edmond," steered the talk into literary channels. On the whole, things went pretty well. Masson was not yet a member of the Academy, hence his hobbies were not those of an Immortal. I tremble when I think how important and overwhelming they became later, and of all the poor people who were obliged to listen to them as being the ideas of a celebrated man.

In spite of Sardou, Masson and the contemporary memoirs, a heavy veil of boredom lies over the First Empire as well as the Second. The Revolution is interesting; one never wearies of studying it. But the first Napoleon has become, in spite of his victories and his misfortunes, a moth-eaten figure, while the third is irritating on account of his inefficiency and his appalling stupidity. The former spilled rivers of blood in vain because of his errors of judgment, and his heroic actions served no purpose. His career is the story of a great mistake, written in letters of red and gold. The Second Empire reveals incapacity that posed as philosophy; it exemplified the art of being beaten in five lessons, how to lose one's territory explained by axioms and formulas. The spirit that animated the Convention was tense and tragic, but at least it had a purpose, a meaning, while the imperialistic spirit was at times a mere empty madness, at times a denial of the laws that govern human nature and the creation of codes and constitutions. Masson made this clear in the case of the First Empire, Émile Ollivier in the case of the Second, and it seems as if Waterloo was fought merely in order to furnish copy for Frédéric, Sedan for Émile. Our disasters ended in these futilities. Thank Heaven, nowadays we have finished with all this Napoleonomania! Nothing is uglier or drearier, nothing is less stimulating, less calculated to arouse the spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion to a cause. The whole thing is fit only for play-actors and excitable men of letters.

In these evenings at Champrosay, music had its place. Léon Pillaut, author of "Instruments et Musiciens," a man of poetic imagination and dreamy and charming character, Maurice Rollinat and Augusta Holmes, used to "awake the echoes of the sonorous woods," as poor Armand Gouzien used to say.

Maurice Rollinat was a mixture of farmer and Baudelairian. He had burning eyes, long hair, was sanely interested in country life, and morbidly curious in regard to the ugly side of psychology. This last trait, alas, brought about his death. The author of "Névroses," and those poems about the Creuse in which one catches here and there accents of the great La Fontaine, gesticulated constantly, his talk was frequently extremely eloquent and he seemed to be the victim of some inner flame which constantly consumed him. We remember him as a young god. At the piano he was simply irresistible, and what a teller of tales! "I am alone, all alone in my little house. Not a sound outside, except the drip of the rain. My three dogs crouch on their haunches. The one nearest the door goes brrrrrrrrr, the next one, in front of the chimney, goes mrrrrrrrrr, the third, lying between my legs, goes grrrrrrrrrr! The lamp light dims. . . . There is certainly a ghost outside, on the threshold, but will it enter—that is the question!" In spite of his funereal fancies and his black magic, Rollinat was always a simple, kindly soul, with a youthful enthusiasm and a sense of humour that enjoyed any sort of lark.

One could find more than one point of resemblance between Rollinat and Pierre Loti, even in their mannerisms. Loti is the most attractive, and at the same time the most annoying man in the world. He is simple and yet complicated, a bundle of contradictions and contrasts. The author of "Madame Chrysanthème" is not tall, and has never ceased to lament that fact. He would be plain if it were not for his magnificent eyes that reflect dreams of far-off things, suspicions and complaints. He absorbs everything about him, and he throws out radiations that are almost those of genius. Loti seems always to be on the point of departing for China, or the South Seas, or some inner life of his own. On the other hand, he is extraordinarily childish, has all sorts of silly notions, and is as sensitive as one of those tropical plants which close up at a touch. Years ending in even numbers, Loti thinks you are a dear, good soul, a splendid chap, the kind of man one can trust implicitly. Years ending in odd numbers, you have hurt his feelings without having meant it in the least, he doesn't like you any more, he knows that you are a horrid little boy one oughtn't to play with. His genuine ignorance regarding human nature is as vast as his assumed ignorance of their writings and doings. Generally, persons of his importance and intellectual standing have a clearly defined position in society, with its accompanying connections and advantages. But Loti cares nothing about fame. Sometimes he finds it too great, sometimes not great enough compared with his own opinion of his talents. Always he feels that it is in the way. He becomes absorbed in trifles, and turns over and over in his mind random remarks which he convinces himself were intended as insults. The author of "Pécheur d'Islande" cares a great deal about those memories which you share in common with him, but he will hate you, all of a sudden, on account of a smile, a sneeze. His sensitiveness rubs against his pride until it makes the sparks fly. He delights in silly practical jokes such as giving a false name when he goes out to buy a loaf of bread or try on a hat, yet he has a genuine sense of humour. He will crack a joke, laugh, become silent, drop into a profound day dream, sail away on its wings quite out of sight, reappear and then complain you have nothing to say. He is a compound of various characters. Among them one may recognize an admirable poet gifted not only in his choice of words but possessing the essence, the aura of the language itself; a wanderer, half knight-errant, half sailor; also, alas, a *concierge*, ready to listen to all the gossip the corner grocer has to tell about the neighbours. His credulousness is as great as are his voyages. He takes Jean Aicard for a poet, the Turks for angels of goodness and loving-kindness. He puts forward his fallacies in a flat, colourless voice, speaking rapidly and with the intonation of a sleepwalker. In my opinion, the sleeping part of Loti's brain, which we never see, is even more remarkable than that which we know. I consider him the victim of some evil spell. What is it, and what is the deed of prowess that is needed to break it?

I must add that my doubts regarding Loti were not shared by those about me. My father was very fond of him, and anyone who ventured to make fun of him would be called to order severely. His return to France was always a joyful occasion, and his departures were melancholy. My father treated him like a younger brother to whom he gladly offered the fruit of his experience. For instance, the letter in which Loti presented himself as a candidate for the Académie Française was written on a corner of Daudet's desk. My father did not care for official recognition so far as his own work was concerned, but he did not attempt to dissuade other writers from trying to obtain it. Enveloped by my father's affection, Loti was perfectly at his ease with us, and sometimes delightfully carefree. He is a hypersensitive being, one of those men whom the slightest harsh criticism wounds and scratches, a rare piece of glass that may be shattered by a false note sounded on a distant violin. This reminds me to say that Loti is also a musician capable of conjuring up a landscape by a phrase of music, as he does a perfume. A sensation produces as enduring an effect on him, as an idea or a striking picture does on the ordinary mortal. But at the bottom of all his work, beneath the nostalgia of "Mon Frère Yves," the radiance of "Fantôme d'Orient," we find a single, high, thin, note. Mortality, the fading of all memories, the constant approach of death, there we have the lyric note dominant in all his books. Loti can never bring himself to accept these things. All his days he is tortured by the passing of the hours. The grains in his hour glass murmur despairingly as they fall one by one. Human beings can be divided into two classes—those who, once and for all, accept the fact that some day, at a turn in the road, they will come face to face with old Father Time, scythe in hand, and those who will not admit that this will ever come. Pierre Loti belongs to the latter class. Every day he dies of sorrow, overcome by the thought of growing older.[1]

Augusta Holmes, the singer and composer, who must have been very beautiful once upon a time, was another visitor at Champrosay. She came accompanied by her old friend Glaser, who admired her respectfully and spoke of her as "the Goddess," and she sang his pathetic Irish melodies in a deep, moving voice. In summer Holmes would sing with all the windows open, not worrying about the possibility of the open air spoiling the quality of her voice. Her highly individual manner captivated and charmed her audience, reminding them of the melodies of the Sirens. *Eheu fuge sirenarum*

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[1] Written in 1913. Loti died in 1923. (Translator's note.)

cantus, fuge littus avarum. Her life, its disillusions and disappointments, all the ardour and bitterness of her existence, were evidenced in that dramatic contralto in which one also could hear the moans of shipwrecked sailors and the clamours of the gale. The Demon of Bayreuth had impressed his mark on her; but in spite of this she preserved her own individuality, that of some sea nymph, the passionate child of the elements, daughter of air and foam. When Holmes had finished singing, deep vibrations lingered in the air; it was several minutes before they died away. She would turn towards her listeners, one hand on the piano; it was a hand still beautiful, on which shone a sea-green jewel. At that moment a curious noise, half chuckle, half whinny, would be heard. It was Father Glaser manifesting his appreciation.

Here is a description of one among a hundred dinners at Champrosay, that I still remember: One saw, around the table, Émile Zola, then in the midst of his cure for obesity; he had just discovered, simultaneously, his lost youth and a great moral and physical love affair (he no longer talked about being chaste); the art of music, personified by Zola's double, Alfred Bruneau; Georges Rodenbach, with his delicate, pale, melancholy countenance, his picturesque way of speaking, and voice at times rather nasal; the American painter, Whistler, looking like an attractive Mephistopheles with his little white lock, a swan feather, tossed back among the rest of his still black hair, and his falsetto voice which had sudden, deeper notes quite odd in their effect; Whistler's brother-in-law, Whibley, a keen critic and a placid and humorous Englishman, rather like a quarter-slice of Cheshire cheese, but such excellent Cheshire; Edmond de Goncourt, annoyed by the presence of Zola, who rubbed all his fur the wrong way; Madame Darcoise, an intimate friend of the family, well read, clever, most agreeable to talk to, whom these gentlemen enjoyed teasing on her absent-mindedness; Marcel Schwob, at that time a schoolmate of mine at Louis-le-Grand, a most learned Jew, fat, homely, attractive, a positive encyclopedia of erudition, whom Zola and the Naturalists irritated—this was before the Dreyfus affair;—my parents, my brother, Lucien Daudet, and myself. It was the first time that Zola had met Whistler, and he was anxious to impress him. He began by expounding his theories on orchestral music and symphonies. He declared that Bruneau, having taken music by the scruff of its neck, was preparing to drag it away from conventional methods, "the purringth of Mozart and all the retht of them," and make it "the great interpreter of life in general, blending love and hatred in the vatht, tumultuouth uproar of the univerthe." In vain Schwob and I joined Rodenbach in an attempt to prove to the simple-minded philosopher of Médan that such servile imitation of Nature would be both tedious and second-rate. Zola became annoyed and almost lost his temper. The rest of us, "the young people," faithful disciples of the Concerts Lamoureux and ardent admirers of Wagner, stuffed our napkins into our mouths to keep from laughing at the idea that Bruneau, who constantly seemed on the lookout for a meal, could surpass the "Götterdämmerung" with "L'Attaque du Moulin," or "Tristan und Isolde" with "Le Rêve." Whistler, pointing to Zola, who bristled with rage, exclaimed in his high falsetto, "Yes, yes, when he gets into a railroad carriage he wants this man, Bruneau, to describe his baggage with the violins. That's the idea, isn't it?" Goncourt shrugged his shoulders. After dinner, Zola, while he was scalding himself with a cup of tea (he always insisted on taking it very hot and very strong), kept muttering between his teeth, "What ecthtraordinary creatureth thethe Americanth are; thith one hath thomething Thatanic about him." While Whibley told me confidentially, "Mr. Zola, when he says all those remarkable things, ought to have his face blackened like a miner. He imagines that we are attending night school." This was absolutely true. Rodenbach expressed the same idea when he said, "He takes us for people who wear overalls."

In the train going back to Paris, that same evening, the author of "Germinal" was so nervous that he spent his time unscrewing all the metal fixtures in the compartment, chuckling as he did so. This prank, doubtless, was intended to convey the idea that he considered us, who ventured to sneer at Bruneau, as a mere pack of infants, and that he was now offering us amusements we could appreciate. At the same time, Zola always posed as one of "the young men." What a queer, sly, underhand Italian he was, in spite of his efforts to appear frank and above board!

Those were the days, about ten years before the Dreyfus affair, when Naturalism was losing ground rapidly. In the opening pages of his volume, "Là-Bas," Huysmans cast off the ties that bound him to that school, and simultaneously Henri Céard, the best mind of the entire group, also struck out for himself, and produced plays and novels very different from those of his presumptive teacher. There was published in the "Figaro," about this time, an anti-Zola manifesto, known in literary history as "The Manifesto of the Five Writers." In it five men of letters [1] belonging to the younger generation denounced the superficiality of Zola's æsthetic opinions, and separated themselves from his school. One of the results of the manifesto was an article in the "Écho de Paris," by a certain Henry Bauer, an illiterate critic who trod with feet of lead and looked like a portrait of Dumas the elder drawn by a policeman. In it Bauer abused and denounced my father, Guy de Maupassant, Edmond de Goncourt, and several other authors, as having encouraged "the five" in their revolt. His tirade ended with something about a Japanese screen, this being intended as a reference to Edmond de Goncourt. The latter disliked Zola as much as the father of the "Rougon-Macquarts" disliked him, but was much too straightforward to be responsible for any indirect attack. "Poor Guy" was keeping out of literary quarrels just then, spending his neurasthenic days boating in the company of dangerous females. He was already a victim of his disease, and felt the premonitory symptoms of general paralysis.

Another of our visitors at Champrosay, and one of the signers of the manifesto, was J.-H. Rosny the elder, who knows so well how to depict misery and its intellectual hallucinations. He is also a magical reconstructor of prehistoric times. Although he was, just then, studying revolutionary socialism, and the hunger, misery, and travail of the "smoky suburbs," his natural curiosity and a healthy optimism made him an opponent of the Naturalists. He is indeed a strange compound of the man of action and the passive thinker. He has not yet had the opportunity to display his gifts in the former of these two rôles, but as a thinker he has already accomplished much. He has antennæ that stretch in all directions; nothing in Nature is alien to him; his conversation bristles with novel and interesting ideas. His books sell fairly well, and he has a certain following. If we had, however, sincere literary criticism and normal progress towards literary fame—not an artificial progress made for, and kept up by, commercial manufacturers of fiction, conservative or radical —he would be ten times as well known as René Doumic or Marcel Prévost. His first book, "Marc Fane," a counterpart of Thomas Hardy's masterpiece, "Jude the Obscure," showed some peculiarities of construction, but "Sous le Fardeau" is an entertaining volume, as is "La Guerre du Feu." In the domain of pseudo-scientific fiction, H. G. Wells has never done anything more than amplify "Les Xipéhuz."

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[1] J.-H. Rosny Aîné, Lucien Descaves, Paul Margueritte, Gustave Guiches and Paul Bonnetain.

When he came to visit us at Champrosay, Rosny was obsessed with the idea which brought fame to Gall, the German phrenologist, namely, the classification of human beings according to the shapes of their skulls. In the midst of dinner, if the discussion became animated, he would get up and begin feeling the parietals, the occiputs and the foreheads of his fellow guests, explaining meanwhile, with the utmost good humour, that it is impossible for people with differently formed heads to agree on anything. All intellectual differances, he would say, are merely questions of anatomy. When, as frequently happened, we organized athletics, foot races, wrestling, torch-light processions, or games of prisoner's base, in the park, he always took a prominent part. He has always been as robust and agile as an Indian, and excels in all forms of physical exercise. It is naturally one of my pleasures at the friendly dinners of the Académie Goncourt, nowadays, to catch his smile—the "short-headed Persian," as we should have called him in 1889!

In spite of the widest possible divergence in our political opinions, a solid, unshaken affection still links me to Gustave Geffroy. All he has to do is to avoid reading those articles of mine in which I am unkind to certain republican theories and those who apply them. I can sum up Geffroy in a single phrase: Absolutely honest. By this I mean that he never makes any of those promises between right and wrong which are so common. He defends his beliefs and his friends with sincerity, laughter, and a perspicacity obstinate as that of a Breton sailor, but a sailor who for many years has cruised through the crowded districts of a great city, and has sailed past the islands of the sirens and seen the sharks, and the bodies of those who go down to the sea in ships. Just as Rosny knows intimately the district of Montrouge, so Geffroy knows that of Belleville. It is no little thing to have learned the story and the life of one of those portions of Paris where the stones are never silent, whispering all day, crying all night. Read Geffroy's "L'Apprentie," and tell me what you think of it. The love of Paris, of its winding by-ways, its glittering avenues, its spectres, its mysteries, the sudden showers, the quickly dried sidewalks that invite you to take long, long walks, the lighted windows, the passing women in all their diversity, the city's various trades, honest and dishonest—this love unites in a common bond all those who care for our city. I know a certain young Parisienne who, in the midst of a flurry of February snow, catching sight of some lighter space in the sad-colored clouds above the chimney-pots of the Quai des Orfèvres, will exclaim: "Spring's here! Paris is always first in everything!" Geffroy feels the same way, and has an optimistic belief in the beauties of the urban landscapes which he describes.

Where art is concerned, he has natural, instinctive good taste, that sensitiveness of eye, of nose, of touch, which makes its possessor recognize beauty wherever he comes across it, and which causes him to proclaim the genius of a Rodin or a Carrière years before anyone else has grasped it. Firm as his own Celtic granite, Geffroy sticks to his point of view. He wrote twenty, thirty, a hundred articles, then another hundred, and finally a hundred more, declaring that Eugène Carrière was, in a sense, the French Rembrandt; that those harmoniously contorted shapes of Rodin's were a reincarnation of the work of the mighty Michael Angelo. In my mind I am never able to separate these two artists from the man who first gave them their just deserts, who did so much to make them famous. Thanks to Geffroy, it was in the columns of Clemenceau's paper, "La Justice," that, in those days, the flame of æsthetic criticism burned the brightest. In his articles we found the traditional French common sense at its best. He was the first to point out, as has been done a hundred times since, that Carrière and Rodin were both classicists.

Bearded, taciturn, thick-set, his eyes wrinkled up over some perpetual joke which only he understood—such was Auguste Rodin when he came to see us at Champrosay. He looked like one of those mariners, who, so Rabelais tells us, received on a still, clear night the last message of the Great God Pan. When Rodin made a remark he spoke in a low voice, as though he were telling you something confidential, but a storm of power and energy eddied about him. His presence caused the conversation to rise to higher levels, banished banalities, made the women more beautiful, the atmosphere more agreeable. On the other hand, Carrière was like some sly, yet simple, peasant. His face was the colour of damp soil. He spoke fast and indistinctly. This painter of dim, elusive abstractions had, however, the keenness of a steel blade; he saw people and things clearly and noted them down pitilessly. His sharp, satirical glance caught, and his hand fixed on canvas, those moral traits lying beneath physical appearances, the hereditary, permanent realities to be found beyond temporary variations. He was able to see people not only as they stood before him but as they had been for a hundred and fifty years; he could note their present aspirations and those of their great-grandparents. He has been called "the painter of the family," but I should call him "the painter of the race."

When one passes the limits of any other art one reaches the domain of literature, since that alone is boundless. A great writer lay dormant in Carrière. You can obtain only a faint idea of this unknown author from his posthumous publications. But he was present in his abrupt, choppy conversation. This was generally delivered in a sing-song voice. The painter was a timid man, yet when he stood in a corner, beside a window, pulling away at his scanty mustache, his hands in his pockets, he would make stinging, bitterly true remarks about people who passed by. Under his farmer-like exterior Carrière was a delightful wit, a positive poet to whom nothing and nobody mattered, who hated conventionalities, social lies and ready-made opinions. He was a great figure, and one whose importance will grow with time. At a recent exhibition of his paintings—I think it was at the École des Beaux-Arts, where some thirty of his canvases were brought together—it was impossible not to be aware that one was in the presence of a genius. The exhibition was a triumph, not only for the dead painter but for the living critic, for Gustave Geffroy as well as for Eugène Carrière.

When one called on Carrière in his studio he would exhibit marvellous landscapes, simplified to the very essentials. "Now, that's amusing, isn't it? That's just the way it looked to me. You get funny kinds of tints in the spring, but people always keep looking at those one finds in the fall." He lived simply, in the midst of his family and his models, and he died bravely, after a long, painful illness, without a word of complaint. While he was at work on his portrait of my father and my little sister, Edmée, the latter said to him, "You put blue and yellow and red paint on your palette. How does it happen to come out grey?" This innocent remark made Carrière laugh heartily—"Oh, these children, they find out things that grown-ups would never think of!"—This master painter has had (more than most) many a silly remark made about him, but the day is coming when he will make the fortunes of the Jewish picture dealers, as Monet, Sisley, Cézanne, Van Gogh and so many others have done. My private sources of information allow me to announce that Carrière will shortly be quoted on that very flourishing institution, the "oil market."

As we go on in these reminiscences, and especially in the "attic" of the Goncourts, we shall meet a number of others who were regular or occasional visitors to our house. In the meantime, I wish to speak of the storm aroused by Édouard Drumont's book, "La France Juive," to which I have already referred. That tempest marks a date in history, since it raged first among men of letters, then spread to the general reading public, and finally resounded in all classes of society. It stirred people everywhere, broke in upon their thoughts, made them stop and consider a serious problem. Since the storm began, it has encountered the agitation in favor of General Boulanger (which did not divert its course), and then the Dreyfus affair, by which the Jews took their revenge for Drumont's revelations and denunciations. But this, too, has passed, and still the disturbance continues, with fresh vigour. Who can say where it will end?

CHAPTER V

A Book That Made History, Drumont's "La France Juive"—Arthur Meyer—The Production of "Sapho"—Porel and Réjane—Goncourt's "Germinie Lacerteux" at the Odéon—Victorien Sardou.

MY father said to me: "To-morrow Drumont's book 'La France Juive' will be put on sale.. It's a ticket he's drawing in the literary lottery. There are two fat volumes stuffed full of facts, with documents, but they are as interesting reading as a novel of adventure. The people he talks about are going to try to keep quiet about it. I don't think they will be able to do so. Someone in their crowd will let loose about it, and he, by breaking away, will give the book its sendoff."

"Jewish France." "The Jews." These words had no particular meaning for me. Of course, one said "The Eugène Manuels are Jews. The Hayems are Jews. Albert Wolff is a Jew." But this epithet, if it had any meaning at all, involved a question of religious belief rather than one of race, and was without any insulting implication. The principles of Republicanism, the philosophic theories in Burdeau's class-room, the general attitude at l'École de Médecine, where I was just beginning my studies—according to all these, the Jews were no different from *other* Frenchmen, as we used to say. Before Drumont threw his bomb he had made no effort to propagate his ideas. They would not have been understood if he had.

In those days he lived in a little house, in the midst of other little houses, at the end of the rue de l'Université. I remember it well, for occasionally I had the great honour and pleasure of being asked to lunch. Where young people were concerned he was more delightful, more friendly, more one of us, than any other writer of his years. Using his ability to stimulate the ideas of others, he would adroitly question his young guest and put him at his ease, smiling at his candour and correcting imperceptibly some of his false judgments of men and events. He did not like Lockroy nor those about him, although he had a great respect for Victor Hugo. After telling me that later I would understand these matters better, he avoided mentioning the person to whom he always referred as "Simon, alias Lockroy." This "alias" upset me dreadfully. Surely, one could take a pseudonym or choose a surname if one wished to? If you couldn't even do that, where was all that personal liberty we heard about?

"Yes, my friend, personal liberty—we know all about that; it was settled once and for all in the days of the great Revolution," Drumont would reply. I dwell upon this point because it is the exact truth; Drumont has never attacked anyone's private opinion. In private life, he has always been a model of tolerance, and people who picture him as a fire-breathing dragon are on the wrong track. He is not, nor has he ever been, a pamphleteer. He is a social historian, as Balzac was, or—strange as the analogy would seem—as Renan was. He does not hold inner dialogues with himself as did the author of the "Life of Jesus," but the bitter, yet broad-minded, irony which fills his veins and drips from his pen is the masculine form of that feminine satire which made Renan's reputation. Drumont brought the latter's "Histoire du Peuple d'Israël" up to date.

Time passed, and Alphonse Daudet, who read with care several newspapers every day, noted regretfully that nowhere was "La France Juive" spoken of. At last, one morning he held out the "Figaro" to me, with: "Here it is. Magnard has 'spilled the beans.' How pleased I am!"

It was a fact—the wily editor of the most widely read paper in Paris had managed to slip into his special editorial column a few lines about a book which he described as "terrible, savage, frequently unfair, but which nevertheless—— . . ." The adjectives of praise or blame were skilfully calculated to arouse the reader's curiosity and interest, to render famous over night a man whose name had till then been totally unknown except in literary circles. I could have danced for joy. I had felt how unfair it was to overlook or stifle such a work, so courageous and original. I felt that "the sombre forest, comparable to that of Dante," as my father called it, should arouse general enthusiasm, Naturally, I had read the volumes as soon as they had appeared. They were a revelation to me, just as great as were some of the outstanding works on medicine which I had studied.

A new problem, that of the defense of an assailed race, presented itself to my young brain. It appeared radiant in all the glow of Drumont's fiery prose; his tone was so reserved, yet so intense, that certain chapters have ever since kept ringing in my brain like clanging tocsins.

Once the impetus had been given, things moved fast. Inside of forty-eight hours the edition which Marpon had put on sale was exhausted. It became necessary to reprint the book at once. For more than an hour I stood by the book-stalls, under the galleries of the Odéon, watching the crowd of buyers carry off their parcels. People did not stop to have the two volumes wrapped up, but, putting one in a coat pocket, they opened the other on the spot and began reading, the more quickly to satisfy their curiosity. Some of them hurried, still reading, to benches in the nearby Luxembourg. I reported all this to Drumont, who laughed as he rubbed his hands and repeated constantly, "Ah, my dear Léon, it's simply unbelievable!" I have never been envious of anyone, yet I would have given anything to change places with him, to be able to provoke simultaneously such hatred and such admiration.

Among the politicians of the Republican party there was a general outburst of surprise and indignation. "Oh, so you know *him,* do you? Well I can't congratulate you on your acquaintances. What sort of man is he, anyhow? Everything he says is false from beginning to end. I've known the Rothschilds, myself, for the past twenty years. It's a most abominable libel, an absolutely unreadable mess, a mere collection of tittle tattle. Someone's paying him for it, you may be sure of that. He's nothing but a vulgar, ordinary blackmailer; the best thing to do is simply to shrug your shoulders and ignore the book altogether. That's the way right-minded people will treat this 'muck-raking.' " These are mild samples of what was said in official circles. But among men of letters a different verdict was delivered, and, as far as the students were concerned, the impression made by the book was favorable, as a rule. They admired the courage of a man, who, single-handed, had attacked the powerful financial magnates. People wanted to know more about this fiery polemist; in the midst of general inertia he had suddenly appeared on the scene, and dashed into action. What was Drumont like? Did he wear armour like a knight of old. Was he a seer? Was he old or young? I tried to be in a dozen places at the same time, to answer all these questions, and I went about describing Drumont as he dwelt in his tiny, hospitable villa. I added that if anyone tried to pick a quarrel with the author of "La France Juive" he would be found ready to give tit for tat.

It was Arthur Meyer, as his bad luck would have it, who picked the quarrel. The following details of their encounter, which I have learned since, present the facts regarding that "blow below the belt," which, completing what Magnard had begun, served to make Drumont famous almost over night. On page 188 of the second volume of "La France Juive" appears a description of Arthur Meyer by Carle des Perrières. It is a quotation from the latter's "Figures de Cire," and it dates from 1869. The portrait is an unflattering one. In it the Jewish editor of the "Gaulois" is referred to as "le duc Jean." It is followed by several pages, by Drumont, on racial psychology. They present Meyer's real claims to be considered a member of the nobility, and make profitable reading for his descendants.

This quotation from des Perrières' book reminded Meyer of a certain heroic incident, the only one of the kind in his noisome existence. When "Figures de Cire" first appeared, he had gone to the Maison Dorée, a celebrated restaurant on the boulevards (where he was in the habit of lunching with ostentatious simplicity on an egg and a glass of water), to choose two seconds whose social connections should be such that his own respectability would be firmly established. He found them readily enough; good-natured people are fairly numerous. Nevertheless, on the night before the duel one of the seconds, an extremely brave man who had taken part in a number of famous encounters, felt certain scruples. He confided them to his companion. "After all, we don't know much about this Jew. He's likely to go back on us at the last minute. Where does he live, anyway?"

"In the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. But it's half past one, and he's probably in bed."

"That doesn't make any difference; come along with me."

Arthur, in pursuit of his one object in life—to be a society man at any price—had rented a servant's room on the top floor of one of the handsome mansions in this fashionable neighbourhood. The words, "Faubourg Saint-Honoré" looked well on his visiting cards under that magic inscription, "Secretary to Blanche d'Antigny." The two seconds found the house, and rang the bell at the monumental entrance. The grumbling *concierge* informed them, from his bed, "Monsieur Meyer, room 27, stairway 6, in the back of the court. It's on the top floor."

"Damn!" said the nocturnal visitors.

At last, after scratching many a match, they succeeded in discovering first staircase 6, then room 27 (only the figures are fictitious in this strictly truthful narrative). One of the seconds knocked several times. Finally, the door was opened by an ugly, barefoot little Jew, almost bald, clad in his night shirt and holding a candle that shook as he shivered with fright.

"Ah, so there you are, Meyer. You remember that you have a duel to fight to-morrow morning, and that we are your seconds."

"Yes, yes, gentlemen."

"The point is, you mustn't fail us. If you do, you'll have to fight us." The other second, who was meanwhile eyeing his principal with ill-disguised disgust, interrupted suddenly:

"Have you got anything we can heat water in, in this den of yours?"

"I have a little stove, sir."

"Have you a sponge?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you a wash-tub?"

"Yes, sir."

"That's fine. I'll give you a scrubbing myself, for," added the lusty fire-eater, "I don't want to have anything to do with a corpse that has dirty feet."

No sooner said than done. Taking off his coat, the speaker got out the wash-tub and set about heating the water, while his companion roared with laughter. When everything was ready, he set about lathering his man, currycombing him as though he were a mule. As the toilet proceeded, Meyer's courage began to come back. The bath was followed by a hard rub-down with eau de cologne, after which the intruders gave Arthur Meyer back his shirt, tucked him into bed, and left him there to think things over. The next morning, in excellent form—feeling, in fact, like a new man—Meyer fought like a lion, and when the affair was over modestly received the congratulations of all the spectators. It was the recollection of this success that was to bring about his downfall. Re-reading, in "La France Juive," the quotation from Carle des Perrières, Meyer remembered what had happened seventeen years before. He felt again the sturdy pressure of his trainer's hands on his ribs, his back, his arms. He imagined that history would repeat itself. He had not the slightest idea what a formidable adversary he was to encounter.

My father has described to me again and again the incidents of the duel, re-living it, as he did so, minute by minute. Drumont, as they went out to the grounds, was in high spirits. He delighted in the great success of his book, and in having the chance to fight a Jew. He delighted to fence without a mask. He laughed and joked with his two seconds, Alphonse Daudet and Albert Duruy. Hardly had the referee uttered the traditional phrase, "Allez, messieurs," than he began to follow his usual tactics, driving straight ahead, engaging his opponent's blade, or if that was not possible, forcing it aside and lunging directly at him. Any fencing master will tell you that such a method is utterly mad, but nevertheless nine men out of ten will, if attacked in this manner, give ground, bending the arm somewhat and leaving an opening under the guard. A duel is no fencing bout; you must count on the element of surprise and the advantage of taking risks. The more skilful, agile and determined your adversary is, the more essential it becomes to gain the upper hand by a sudden offensive at the start, and not let him choose his own method of attack. Drumont knew all this well. In the present instance, Meyer recoiled. Drumont followed him up, pressed in upon him. Then, feeling himself lost, Meyer seized his opponent's weapon in his left hand.

The fight was stopped and Meyer apologized. Again the duellists took their places. Again Drumont pressed his attack. Meyer, again at bay, repeated his tactics. This time, however, he did not merely protect himself. This time he again seized Drumont's blade in his left hand, but at the same moment he wounded his opponent in the hip. Those who defend Meyer by talking about a natural reflex action prove their ignorance of fencing. I myself have been in a number of combats—some of them pretty hot ones—and I have always had the feeling that my left side had ceased to exist, that there was only one arm both for attack and defense. I should add that the custom of specifying, when drawing up the rules of a duel, "The use of the left hand is forbidden," dates from this unfair blow in the Drumont-Meyer affair. Yet it has always seemed to me to be superfluous. In a business contract, one of the contracting parties does not specify that the other party shall not steal his pocketbook when he is not looking.

Another thing: Since imminent danger increases a person's presence of mind, Meyer knew what he was about. Like the Jew he is, he preferred to be dishonoured rather than lose his life. His racial instinct showed him, in a flash, that one can compromise with disgrace, one can make arrangements, but there is no temporizing with grim-faced Death.

Albert Duruy and Alphonse Daudet declared that the scene which followed was unforgettable. Drumont, dripping with blood and mad with rage, bellowed at Meyer what he thought of him. A Frenchman, in such a case, would have lost his mind or thrown himself on his sword. The Jew quickly recovered his self-possession and, when he returned to the office of the "Gaulois," where the staff was waiting anxiously to learn the outcome of the encounter (it was before the days of the telephone), merely declared, "Gentlemen, do not congratulate me; I have behaved badly." Ten minutes later he added, with his customary effrontery, "It would take a great war to banish this duel from the public eye." (Doubtless a *small* war wouldn't have been enough.)

Fifteen years later, when these incidents had been forgotten, and Drumont had forgiven his opponent (the polemist's long career had made him philosophical), I was working under Meyer on the "Gaulois." At that time I made up my mind about him once and for all. Arthur Meyer is not, usually, a cruel or a wicked man, except when he feels that his vanity or his career is threatened, but he is obsessed by an overpowering impulse to betray people—just as other persons have an impulse to lie or to steal. In his case this tendency is accompanied by a love of ostentatious display and a desire to appear important, to learn other people's secrets, and, as the popular saying has it, to poke his nose into his neighbour's affairs.

The evening after the duel, Drumont's faithful servant, Marie, let me in to see her master. I found him in bed, all bandaged up, calm, but pale from the loss of an enormous quantity of blood. The voices of the newsboys calling out, "Full account of the Drumont-Meyer duel!" could be heard in his room, and he drew my attention to it, adding that the affair appeared to be no hallucination due to his fever but real enough. He had, however, not a word of anger or of complaint. He was a stoic where important events were concerned, although easily upset by the little annoyances of everyday life.

The Jewish question now became an outstanding problem. Many Frenchmen were taken by surprise. Naturally, the Jews themselves were furious, and the pro-Hebrew gentiles even more so. Their only line of talk was to point out some unimportant errors contained in "La France Juive," errors which were practically unavoidable in so vast a work and in a case in which it was so difficult to sift the evidence. Drumont's opponents counted on the passage of time to extinguish this conflagration, as it has extinguished so many others. But, curiously enough, as more and more years have passed, the stronger the anti-Semitic movement has become in France. The new generation is even more deeply affected by it than was ours.

One of the prominent Hebrews of that day was Victor Koning, manager of the Théâtre Gymnase. He was short, yellow and fat—Rochefort once compared him to a worm in a hazel-nut, and the description is perfect—and had bleary eyes without eyelashes. He was so constantly afraid of getting spots on his clothes that he kept looking all the time at his trousers and waistcoat. Like Meyer, he was always kissing the ladies' hands. One day he told my father that he should be extremely annoyed if he met Drumont at any social function. The author of "Numa Roumestan" replied that that was too bad, as it would oblige him to leave our house whenever Drumont called. I remember Koning especially in connection with the production of "Sapho," the play my father dictated to me at Saint-Estève. The manager had just married his lovely star, Jane Hading, and the popular saying was, "Koning, Hading, shocking." The contrast between this Venetian dogaresse, with her sweet, beautiful face, and that worm-like creature, was indeed almost indecent. One was tempted to exclaim, "Behold, a Jewish satyr carrying off a nymph!" The mental images evoked by this couple were not pleasing. What can that old abolitionist agitator, Victor Schœlcher, who was platonically in love with the actress, have thought about it?—I never asked him.

At rehearsals, Koning kept getting in the way of everybody, including that of his young wife. He was continually making a rumpus, then suddenly quieting down and continuing to examine his waistcoat and trousers, scratching them earnestly. I should dearly have liked to box his ears, for, like everyone else in Paris, I felt the most ardent admiration for Madame Koning. My companions would say, "What luck you have, to be able to see her often!" This was true enough, but the truth of the matter was that I never ventured to speak to her, and would remain in the wings while the rehearsal was going on devouring her with my eyes and loathing the nincompoop of a husband who dared to call my idol "an idiot" and "a snail!" I thought to myself, such conduct will in time bring its own punishment, and she will not long be able to stand the offensive Jew, with his horrid perfume and his prison-warden ways.

Koning was not devoid of jealousy—queer, in his case!—and when Damala, a paunchy heavyweight who played the part of Jean

Gaussin, took Fanny Legrand in his arms the manager would sputter, "Not so tight as that; don't you dare to squeeze her," which revealed a certain "Othelloism." Much put out by his attitude, Madame Koning would look over toward the author and seem to say, "I'm only following the text and your stage directions!" But nothing could have been more comical than the drooping arms of Damala, thus torn away from his fair victim.

Another attractive woman, Jeanne Darlaud, acted Alice Doré. She was a real artist, and had a most delightful voice. When the actor Landrol, who was excellent as Dechelette, described Alice's suicide, he benefited by the emotion she had provoked in the preceding act. Koning was forever cursing at this actress: "What a damned fool you are, a regular stick! Can't you keep your feet out of sight, damn it," and so on. She needed real patience to put up with him. Since then I have also heard Antoine, a genius, but uncouth in his ways, rant at his actors. He, at any rate, does it like a Parisian, not in the oriental manner. Koning, with a fez on his head and a scimitar at his side, and wearing a pair of flaring red trousers, could have acted perfectly the part of grand vizier in one of the operettas by his compatriot Halévy. He belonged to the bazaar quite as much as to the ghetto. His presence during a performance at the Gymnase produced a pandemonium.

What a difference between Koning and kind, polite, delightful Porel! Ah, *he* was indeed a model manager as far as his dealings with his troupe were concerned! I was present at all his triumphs at the Odéon in the days when he succeeded in luring across the river as many private carriages as one sees now about the Opéra on subscription nights. I saw him put on "L'Arlésienne," "Numa Roumestan," and "Germinie Lacerteux." Porel was never rude to anyone; he would explain quietly, clearly, just what effect he wanted to convey to the audience. "Now, now, my dear girl; don't wriggle about as though you were sitting on an ant heap. Remember that you are a prominent society woman making an afternoon call. And you, that young man back there, get rid of your hat. Don't keep on carrying it around as though it were a topheavy dish of fruit. You are neither a waiter nor a parlour conjuror, but a young lover paying court to his fair lady. Try to make things go smoothly." What good advice was that! Under Porel's guidance people and things would reshape themselves to meet the author's wishes. His love of the stage was contagious, and affected everyone who came into contact with him. As we drove home in a cab my father would say, "What a shame Porel isn't acting the part himself! What a lot he'd get out of it!" Porel was more than a mere producer; he was also an innovator, who, by a little touch here, a little readjustment there, a trifle placed in a certain way, managed to bring out the psychology of a character, or of an episode.

The outstanding features in the production of "Numa Roumestan" were the strong yet caressing bass voice of Paul Mounet, and the delightful silhouette of Mademoiselle Berthe Cerny (since then a famous actress at the Comédie Française), as the little pastry cook. All the spectators looked at her as Numa did. The great successes in "L'Arlésienne," which Porel revived and put on with the most exquisite taste, were scored by Madame Tessandier, who played Rose Mamaï in a most pathetic manner; old lady Crosnier, unforgettable as La Renaude, and again Paul Mounet, the ideal shepherd evoking "the great shepherd up yonder" as no one else has ever done. The play filled the house every time it was given, nor was it necessary to give out those cut-rate tickets which nowadays help to "put over" the worst fizzle, and thus put awry the judgment of real success or failure. The box office turned people away at every performance. And the popularity of the play has continued to this day. Personally I cannot see a performance of "L'Arlésienne" without hearing again the penetrating tones of Alphonse Daudet declaring: "There are some joys which come too late. What a pleasure it would have been, at the Théâtre du Vaudeville, to have heard those curtain calls, that applause, in the old days when I was timidly beginning my career as a dramatist, and heard people say about this play, 'Daudet is no fool—how can he made have such a mistake?'" It is true, that besides having gained by the passage of time, "L'Arlésienne" belongs much more to the Left Bank, among the young people of the schools, with their appreciation of what is fine and beautiful, than to the boulevards.

In the same way, Porel appeared more at his ease, more ready to achieve successes, in the Odéon, where he had begun as a minor employee and of which he was now the commanding officer. He had more confidence in himself, and his broad face was wreathed in smiles, ready to burst into joyous laughter as he would say, "Yes, yes, my friend; yes, my dear friend; yes, my dear, good friend; yes, my dear, good, most excellent and best of friends." He reminded one of those beneficent genii who triumph over every imaginable difficulty, who extinguish fire-breathing dragons by sitting on them and who free the sleeping princess. He created a special atmosphere about his theatre, an atmosphere of cordiality and of neighbourliness—almost of friendship—among his regular subscribers. The professors at the schools of law, medicine and literature were as fervent admirers of his as were their students. Where once provincial marriages were arranged for during performances at the Opéra-Comique, they were now discussed and set on foot at the Odéon in the presence of the approving spirits of Shakespeare and Mendelssohn, Daudet and Bizet, Goethe and Beethoven. I still shiver when I recall Count Egmont and the dying Claire, the trembling lamplight on the stage, and the mournful horn sounding in the orchestra.

Madame Réjane, who had appeared until then in the slightly old-fashioned rôles of Meilhac only—they were not sufficiently important for her—had just joined the company of the Odéon. The idea occurred to Porel of letting her act Germinie Lacerteux, the leading part in the play of the same name which Edmond de Goncourt was just completing. It was this decision that decided the future career of that celebrated actress. At the time, the idea seemed extremely rash.

Playwrights are as interested in the vicissitudes of their brain children as fathers are in the health of their physical children. A dramatist is overjoyed by a success, deeply wounded by a failure. On the stage the verdict is quickly rendered, it falls brutally, like the blow of a club. Alphonse Daudet, when we returned after one of those terrible ordeals, would question my mother and myself feverishly, "Well, are you satisfied? Did things go all right?"

Usually he spent the evening in the private office of the manager, either Koning or Porel. There one heard faint echoes only of what was being said in front, and even these echoes were frequently untrustworthy, especially when the play proved a semi-failure. If the evening had not gone as we should have liked, we would reply, "Hm, hm, so-so, well enough," behind which phrases the poor author was able to guess the truth. This led to a motion of annoyance, with, "You really are too difficult to please; what did you expect, anyway?" at which he'd be the first to laugh the next morning. My mother had a remarkable, natural knack of knowing, from the way in which an audience reacted to a play, just how long it was going to run. I have never known her to be mistaken. Generally, I shared her opinion, and thus we were the ones from whom Alphonse Daudet would learn the unadorned truth, which was far less difficult to bear than subsequent disappointment. What is the use of telling a person, "You have scored a triumph, the play will run for two hundred nights, at least," when the actual result will be very different? Edmond de Goncourt was as happy as a child with a new toy during the rehearsals of his plays and their first few performances. He considered that everything was perfect, that the actors were magnificent, his manager was an angel in a frock coat, and his audiences the finest audiences that had ever existed. He chuckled at all the jokes, and became sentimental during the emotional passages, all the while seated, doubled up, in the back of one of the stage boxes. His black eyes sparkling vividly over a white mustache that might have belonged to a retired cavalry officer, he would say, "Hm, that bit went home, didn't it? Ah, that wonderful Réjane, and Porel and Dumény—you mustn't forget Dumény. I'm sure you have never met as natural a pimp as he is, in all your wanderings in Montmartre or round the Latin Quarter!" When his friends came in to see him between the acts they would find him radiant. "Yes, it's going splendidly, wonderfully! There was just a minute when I was afraid it might be a frost, but it picked up again like lightning. Didn't it, Hennique? didn't it, Geffroy?" Turning to my father, he would add, "What do you say, Daudet?"

On such occasions, the only thing to do is to lie heroically and, even when the evening had not been a success, I would exclaim, shamelessly, "It's simply magnificent, Monsieur de Goncourt!" Then he would inquire what my friends thought about it, and I would swear that they were more than enthusiastic. The dear man laughed with pleasure as he explained, with many gestures of his long, slim, white hands, that, if it had not been for Porel, such and such a stage effect would not have been carried out. Porel had thought in a jiffy of how to get round the difficulty and carry out exactly Goncourt's idea! This was very true. The manager performed miracles to please Goncourt on his first nights and afterwards to keep up for him the illusion that he had made a success. Generally, my dear godfather would send his faithful servant, Pélagie, to attend the second performance. The latter talked to her neighbours in the gallery, questioned the men in the box office, and even the manager's private secretary, and returned burdened with gossip and optimistic predictions to the little house in Auteuil. "Pélagie tells me that all the cheap seats have been taken in advance. That being the case, I don't see how they figure out that the total receipts were only three thousand, eight hundred. There must be a mistake somewhere. I must send the little girl (Pélagie's niece) to the twelfth performance." If it happened to be winter, Porel invoked the cold, the snow, the rain, the difficulty of getting about, to explain the small audiences. In summer, the blame would be laid on the heat, "My dear Goncourt, you must realize I'm not equipped to fight the thermometer," and Goncourt would repeat docilely, but with a touch of melancholy, "We are down to two thousand, five hundred; Porel, at the Odéon, isn't equipped to fight the thermometer." In short, the kind-hearted manager would again on this occasion act the doting grandfather, and try to keep unpleasant reality away from his grandchildren of fifty or sixty. Occasionally, he cast a glance in our direction, as much as to say, "You of the objective, hard-hearted, younger generation, you'll see what it's like when you, in your turn, become dramatists. One has to use mattresses, many, many mattresses, to let them down upon, otherwise it might hurt them, poor dears."

The truth was, the revival of "Henriette Maréchal" was only a mild success, due to curiosity and clever costuming, while that excellent and bitter play, "Germinie Lacerteux," had its troubles at the outset and up to the twentieth performance. In regard to this play, Pélagie might have made the same report when she returned to Auteuil as did my brother Lucien, after the utter failure of "Tartarin de Tarascon." Lucien, then a small boy of eight, appeared in my parents' room at one o'clock in the morning and declared, "Papa, it's a real success; they hissed only three times—I counted." Why did people get angry and hiss at "Germinie Lacerteux"? Réjane and Dumény were admirable in their parts, and so was old lady Crosnier as Mademoiselle de Varandeuil. The scenes followed each other in logical sequence and were really effective, and the interest was cumulative. Nevertheless, at the dress rehearsal and two "first nights" (conscientiously, I attended all three) I saw members of the audience furious with anger, yelping, "It's a disgrace—simply disgusting!" while women called out, "That's enough, that's enough." People of both sexes loudly demanded that their coats be brought them in the middle of an act, hoping to disturb the performance. Being fond of Monsieur de Goncourt, I collected some faithful friends and admirers and we started a counter demonstration intended to terrorize the audience. Although we kept shouting, "You stupid idiots, go back to your Sardou and your Ohnet!" our clamour seemed part of the programme and only added to the general confusion.

The suppers that took place after the "first nights" were gay or gloomy according to the success of the play. That which followed the production of "Germinie Lacerteux" was tepid. People were anxious to congratulate the author on his fine piece of work, but it was impossible not to recognize the hostility of the audience. The only thing left to do was to abuse the critics and the stupidity of the philistines: "What an ass that Sarcey is! He was saying in the hall he didn't understand a word of what it was all about." "That's not surprising; he's busy picking his nose all the time the play is going on." "Bauer [the illiterate critic of the "Écho de Paris"] was very kind. He told Réjane she had surpassed herself. After the third act he was seen weeping." "How about Vitu?" "He left after the second act, very indignant, followed by Mademoiselle Hadamard of the Comédie Française."

Vitu was the dramatic critic of the "Figaro." We considered him a nonentity, as far as the literary value of what he wrote was concerned, but important on account of the class of people who read the paper. Not a line of his articles, not one of his sayings, not one of his criticisms, has survived him. I might say the same about Francisque Sarcey, except that the latter, a stout, jovial soul, liking a good time—and, so it was reported, fond of the ladies—was not by any means the fool he seemed. Nowadays you can have no idea of the curses that were hurled at his round and only semi-obtuse head between 1880 and 1890. They did not disturb his good humour in the least. Sarcey was an enemy of Ibsen, an admirer of action and "the well-constructed play" of Sardou and Bisson. He was widel read by the middle class, and anathematized by everybody else.

Pélagie continued, in the meantime, to report to her maste according to information received from Porel's employees, the names of the persons who had protested or hissed. The So-and-sos had left after the second act; the Thingumbobs had laughed in the middle of the scene with the children. Some of the offenders were acquaintances of Goncourt. The latter, frank in his likes and dislikes, became indignant, and my father had to pacify him, by suggesting gently that these reports by way of the kitchen door might not be strictly accurate. I myself have since wondered if Pélagie did not, at times, "lay it on a bit thick"; if she did not accuse people she disliked personally of being "anti-Germinie-ists." She was a good soul, but, like so many of her class, dearly loved to create a commotion, to make charges, and to accuse people of all sorts of imaginary misdoings. She had her favorites among the regular visitors at the famous "attic" of the Goncourts. They flattered her, while the others, who paid no attention to the worthy woman, might easily have seemed to her to be capable of the most dastardly crimes.

The supper that followed the first performance of "Sapho" took place at our house in the rue de Bellechasse. It was a brilliant and memorable occasion. The guests included Goncourt, Zola and Frantz Jourdain; the last named a well-known architect, a brave, generous soul, but hot-headed, who has espoused all the fads of his generation and defends them eloquently and vigorously. Among the other present were monocled Aurélien Scholl, still fairly preserved in spite of his advanced years, full of high spirits and snobbishness, telling, in a designedly casual manner, wicked stories about his prominent acquaintances; Philippe Gille of the "Figaro," a clever talkative little man; Théodore de Banville, delightfully ironic as ever; and Doctor Charcot, the master diagnostician, who for twenty years ruled despotically over the faculty of medicine. Charcot's magnificent, though somewhat heavy, profile seemed a combination of Dante's and Cæsar's.

Before sitting down to supper, we waited for Koning and his wife, Jane Hading, who had played the leading part. They appeared just as one o'clock was striking—he, as always, a "worm in a nut," black and curly, greasy as a little sausage, anxiously eyeing his shirt-front and trousers; she, lovely as the dawn, still caressed by the plaudits and cheers of the audience. As she entered, another round of applause broke out. Though she begged in winning phrases to be spared, the sensuous quiver of her nostrils betrayed the pleasure of the young tigress. We went into the dining-room, where Zola, sombre and out of sorts as he always was in the presence of another's success, sat down beside Madame Hading and at once began to explain his character to her. In the midst of the general chatter of tongues, we suddenly caught the classic phrase which the father of the "Rougon-Macquarts" uttered with his foolish and burlesque lisp: "I, madame, am a chathed man." Where did his chastity come in at this supper of literary folk? Was it a warning or an invitation, or merely a confession of his beliefs? Several times Koning, whose jealousy was always on the alert, called across to his wife such remarks as, "What's that you're saying? That's not so at all. She doesn't know what she's talking about." But his vulgarities were fortunately lost in the general conversation. He seemed like a gargoyle gibbering at a Titian Venus. As for my friends and I, we forgot to eat or drink as we watched Madame Hading raise a chocolate to her lips or peel an orange. Indeed, I attended, without exception, every performance she gave of "Sapho," but only once in ten did I venture to pay her a visit in her dressing-room. Even then the innocent pleasure would be spoiled for me by the vociferations of the Jewish vizier constantly to be heard in the wings and on the little wooden staircase, "Where is that Declause? Ah, it's you, is it, Monsieur Daudet? No, you can't see Madame Hading, she's lying down. Where's that back drop—damn that back drop!" One day I gave a cabman five francs to tell this lunatic someone was waiting to see him, about a very important matter, next door at the Café Marguery. I hoped in this way to have five minutes in which I could hand Madame Hading's maid a bouquet for "Sapho." But before my envoy had a chance to explain his errand, the damnable Koning burst into a rage, cursed him up hill and down dale, ending with: "Who let this thing loose in the theatre, anyhow? See that he gets out of here—and he'd better be quick about it, too!" I can assure you the cabby earned his five francs. As he fled, he encountered another cabman. This one belonged to the theatre, for he was the actor who played the part of Fanny's father and was calmly smoking his pipe as he waited for his cue. This unexpected meeting with a "colleague" upset my jehu still further.

Another evening, behind the scenes, I encountered Victorien Sardou busy explaining something to the manager of the Gymnase. I knew the dramatist by his plays only, "Fedora," "La Tosca," "Théodora," and by a recent extravagance when I and one of my friends had invested in two seats for his latest production, "Le Crocodile," and found it amazingly dull. To-day Sardou is practically forgotten, but at that time he was the king-pin among Parisian playwrights. He was short in stature, and in his facial expression was a combination of actor, chess-player and beadle. He used many gestures. He used to roll his "r's" as he told innumerable stories, that slipped off his tongue as smoothly as well-buttered macaroni. He explained to me at length that "Sapho" was a fine piece of work, although the second act had such and such a mistake in it, the result of the novel having been reproduced too closely in the play. I did not listen very attentively. Sardou was not highly considered by us students. We spoke of him as a man who wrote plays with entertainment as their only purpose, intended for the snobs and bourgeois of the Right Bank. But he had the reputation of being a brilliant talker. In the present instance, I found him decidedly a bore, and this opinion was thereafter confirmed whenever we met. No, this "devil of a fellow," so dear to Sarcey's heart, really had very little to him. The superficiality and childishness of his character were very apparent. He was a collector of smart sayings, and might appear learned to a cashier in a café. He wore his hair very flat, in order to accentuate a fancied resemblance to the First Consul. The "Gaulois" and the "Figaro" announced each week how he attended his rehearsals, wearing a *beret* and a scarf, and that his country place was at Marly-le-Roi. In short, he played the same public rôle that Edmond Rostand played a little later, minus Rostand's neurasthenia and darling little family. It was impossible for a foreigner—especially if he happened to be an American newspaper man—to come to Paris and not call on Sardou and obtain his views on whatever happened to be the question of the moment. Then the earnest inquirer would hurry over and see Renan, now become a sort of little tin god and village oracle for the Radical party, and compare the opinions of the Collège de France with those of Marly-le-Roi. It was undoubtedly Sardou who first employed for the theatre that kind of high-power, non-stop publicity that "puts across" an aperitif or a new brand of chocolate. Thanks to these undignified methods, he obtained a world-wide but superficial celebrity. Like that of Rostand, it represented the sum of the admiration of all the incompetents. I am told that even now one may find in the huts of Central African cannibals the illustrated supplement of the "Gaulois" that contained scenes and characters from "Théodora."

CHAPTER VI

The Goncourts' "Attic"—Octave Mirbeau—Robert de Montesquiou and His Collections—A Typical Sunday Afternoon at the "Attic"—A Reception at the Princess Mathilde's.

THE little house in which Edmond de Goncourt lived at Auteuil was situated on the boulevard de Montmorency, beside the Ceinture Railway. The house had two stories above the ground floor and a garden of microscopic size. The interior was filled with all sorts of marvellous objects—collector's pieces—which formed an integral part of the setting, since every one had been gathered with loving care by the owner. But he never insisted on one's noticing them. The collector who compels his guests—generally after meals, when they should be digesting their food in peace—to inspect his collection, and listen to his long-winded anecdotes, is a confounded nuisance. Where paintings, bronzes, china, engravings and other articles of vertu are concerned, the mind is more receptive at certain times than at others. Even then, you do not want to have a cicerone obliging you to say politely that you admire statuettes by Clodion or Falconet, when such works do not interest you particularly, or to go into ecstasies over a Nattier that frequently isn't a Nattier at all. No such danger was to be feared in the house of Monsieur de Goncourt. During the fifteen years in which I visited his house, not once did he insist that I look at this or that. On the other hand, he became nervous if one approached too near a particularly precious or fragile work of art. I can still hear him calling out, in that clear voice of his, to Gustave Toudouze, when the latter lay back at his ease against a cream and rose colored embroidery of Beauvais, "Take your head off that, Toudouze, you're soiling it."

With Hennique, Geffroy, Jourdain, Paul Margueritte and Lucien Descaves—who, like myself, are to-day members of the Académie Goncourt—Octave Mirbeau was a constant visitor to the "attic."

To those who have never seen Mirbeau, I offer the following description. He seems to consist wholly of a sharp, incisive, abrupt, vehement voice and two clear eyes with golden lights. His mustache is bristly, his gestures are nervous, and if you contradict him he will gnaw his finger-nails to the very bone. He is the most intensely sensitive being I know, and also the most sensuous, the most explosive, the most changeable. He adores certain people and things or else he detests them—in either case, his feelings are violent. The wheel of life revolves, for all of us, and sympathies and antipathies present themselves in turn. But with Mirbeau the wheel revolves as fast as he can make it spin. All his likes and dislikes are on an exaggerated scale. When judging a person, he even lumps with that person his family, his friends, his ox and his ass, and even his neighbours. The single-mindedness of his work pervades his opinions—if one can call opinions the sharp, merciless, but sometimes highly amusing remarks which he scatters round about. His conversation reminds one of Ulysses returning home and massacring the suitors with his arrows. Those, however, who conquer once and for all his affection—for the latter can be stable, in spite of all appearances—find in his friendship (even in time of squalls) that remedy for solitude and loneliness of heart that Ovid never found. Yes, he will watch over his friends with the tender care of a brother—or a woman. But he demands an unquestioning allegiance—the least contradiction or difference of opinion, where politics, art or letters are concerned, ruffles and irritates him. At first, he considers it a breach of manners, then a betrayal of his confidence, and finally it becomes a crime. He is dissatisfied and on edge; his luminous eyes grow sulky, a wrinkle appears beside his grim mouth; his eyebrows take on an expression of furiously annoyed astonishment. In politics, he obeys his misplaced enthusiasms exclusively. Unable and unwilling to examine them closely, he is positively delighted when he can pursue them to the bitter end, and drain the very lees of the absurd. As a rule he very rightly detests people who are lukewarm in their opinions, and spews them out of his mouth. On the other hand, we have his well-known fondness for the Jews. This feeling has always astonished me—even making allowances for his contradictory, paradoxical nature. If there is any animal under heaven that should be repugnant to him on racial, psychological and physiological grounds, 'it is the Semetic biped. Then, in a lesser degree, he is fond of any kind of an insurgent, because he is an insurgent himself, and sometimes for no reason at all, and, lastly, he likes all under-dogs. Though they may have been guilty of the foulest crimes and have become utterly degraded, the author of "Le Calvaire" will insist that they are full of dreams and visions, and deserve to be cherished and petted. He is always on the lookout for a genius, male or female. He prefers to find such covered with mud and environed in garbage and manure, but if he cannot get hold of someone of that sort, he will compromise on an honest, God-fearing person.

In waging his struggle against common sense—which he mistakes willingly for mediocrity, different as the two are—Mirbeau has two points of refuge; namely, his love of flowers and of paintings. So far as they are concerned his taste is excellent, almost infalilble, and he judges them with a serene and unchanging fidelity of admiration. Naturally, his preferences are well calculated to exasperate the people to whom Flaubert referred as "bourgeois," or, more exactly, "enlightened amateurs." It is Mirbeau who is in the right. Art dealers know this and follow his lead, step by step, list in hand. In spite of what many have said, Mirbeau does not care for the violent or the startling in art. He seeks the classic note, but his is a classicism that the crowd does not yet recognize. His eye, like that of Geffroy, is fifteen years ahead of his day. One catches up with him about thrice in a lifetime.

In "Les Grimaces," a little weekly pamphlet with a red cover which he published about 1885, Mirbeau began by attacking my father violently and unjustly. Later a sort of reconciliation was effected between them. Goncourt was instrumental in this, for he was very fond of Mirbeau. The latter reciprocated the advances my father made, and nothing ever interfered with their friendship thereafter. This is a point worth remembering.

Another of Goncourt's intimates was J.-K. Huysmans. This writer, who had never any real affiliation with Zola, although the latter claimed him as a disciple, was grave and silent as some bird of darkness. He was tall, and had a slight stoop, a hook nose, deep-set eyes, scanty hair, long twisted lips hidden under a flossy mustache, and a grey skin. His delicate hands were like those of some engraver of precious stones. His conversation was generally vague, and consisted largely of disagreeable comments on contemporary men and events. He disliked everybody and everything of his generation, from modern cooking, with its ready-made sauces, to the style in hats. He loathed the times in which he lived, their general stupidity, their commonplaceness, their imitation of originality, their anti-clericalism and bigotry. The architecture of the modern engineers, the well-intentioned but conventional religious sculpture, the Eiffel Tower, and the statues which one finds in the shops about Saint-Sulpice, all these positively tortured him. Dominated by his tactile, auditory, olfactory and visual sensations, he became a positive martyr to them, like Saint Lydwine, and was constantly seeking some means of escape. Barbey d'Aurevilly, in his famous article that followed the publication of "À Vau l'Eau," offered him the choice between the revolver and the cross. We know the result. All the critics have spoken of Huysmans as "a painter of interiors," the successor of the Flemish masters, small and great, from whom he descended. But he was also very much of a Parisian, a cruel jester, incisive and abrupt in his opinions, a bundle of nerves.

You should have seen him at bay, forced into a corner by some bore in the Goncourts' "attic"! He would puff at his cigarette and seek some means of making a stealthy escape, all the while eyeing his troublesome neighbour with the glance of a martyr who would like only too well to become an executioner. One day I helped him out of such a predicament. "Thanks for my knee-caps," he said; "I thought I should never get them unstuck from that loathsome creature." I can assure you Huysmans did not mince his words. A stroke from his verbal claws would generally leave five bloody lines on the nose of the person who had displeased him.

Robert de Montesquiou is said to have served Huysmans as model for des Essaintes, the principal character in "À Rebours," his first success. I do not know whether or not they had ever met at the Goncourts'. They certainly were not made to get on together. Since then Montesquiou has cheapened himself terribly—the fatal result of trying to become famous—but in those days he was looked on as a remotely aloof and unbending person. He dwelt at the extreme tip of that literary Kamchatka about which Sainte-Beuve writes. His abode was in a pavillion built of mosaics and abounding in rare plants, marvellous books, subtle perfumes. There, on pages of specially selected vellum, he wrote poems that are difficult to understand, full of allusions and harmonics, like nothing so much as those complicated structures which sailors make of shells. The man was as enigmatic as the author. Long and thin, of indeterminable age, he appeared to have been set in a mould for all eternity. The wrinkles of his forehead had been carefully ironed out, and he dressed with that perfection where the art of the tailor becomes invisible. A rare flower bloomed in his button-hole, and also in his conversation.

For the benefit of the initiate, Montesquiou would tell long, obscure stories about the innermost circles of high society. When he had almost reached the climax of his narrative he would suddenly go off in a gust of high, reedy laughter and then, as though seized with remorse, he would cover his mouth with his hand until the fit of incomprehensible merriment had passed. You felt as though he had suddenly taken laughing gas. The difference between the importance which he attaches to his anecdotes and their real value has always amazed me. He has a mind that magnifies, like a microscope, all sorts of tiny incidents and futilities. A knick-knack looks to him as vast as the "Moses" of Michael Angelo, a morsel of gossip about a discharged servant becomes as terrifying as deadly curare. Those tales about Swiss governesses, English "misses" or German "fräuleins," about fossilized old aristocrats, about ultra-fashionable persons who know nothing of literature,—all this tittletattle on which Montesquiou positively dotes, in public and in private, has always bored me to distraction. When, as he does, he comes up close to me—a mere nobody who makes a living by his pen—and, stressing the precious last letters of his words, bends toward me and explains the mental insignificance of the What's-their-names and the So-and-sos, I feel I must get away in a hurry. He probably feels the same way about me. But, at any rate, we have never had, and shall never have, anything in common. In the days when he went to the Goncourts', he mixed with men of letters in very much the same spirit in which certain fashionable lecturers hobnob with the working classes. On such occasions they assume a sort of uniform, a combination of overalls and frock-coat, which is intended to show their audiences that, while afraid of overwhelming the proletariat with the splendor of their full evening attire, they nevertheless have paid them the compliment of dressing. This always delights writers of radical tendencies. All Robert de Montesquiou had to do was to stick a red cockade in his hat and tell incendiary anecdotes about very aged, very highly titled ladies—the sort of thing we read about the queen in the "Tour de Nesles." Obviously it is easier to humbug radicals than anyone else. With authors belonging to the conservative parties, Montesquiou was not so much at his ease. He could not very well explain to them that titles are utterly unimportant, since they appeared to attach importance at least to hereditary distinctions, nor could he capitalize the social snobbery which was frequently lacking in their make-up. Hence, he never knew just which foot to stand on. I enjoyed greatly watching his antics in this uncomfortable position. As I have said before, I detest inspecting collections. Montesquiou has a mania not only for exhibiting the objects he has brought together, but also for gushing over them while describing each one in full detail. Thus you are shown in succession, a hair from the beard of Michelet, a cigarette that graced the lips of Georges Sand, a dried tear of Lamartine, the bath-tub of Madame de Montespan, the bed-pan used by Napoleon after Waterloo, the cap of Marshal Bugeaud, Governor of Algiers, the bullet that killed Pushkin, a dancing slipper worn by La Giuccioli, a bottle of absinthe from which de Musset drank, a stocking that belonged to Madame de Raynal—the last named accompanied by Stendhal's autograph. Such are the inestimable treasures preserved by a poet drunk with loneliness and garrulity! When a visitor of importance calls, he is taken from one marvel to another, while the happy owner, waxing sentimental, relates the history, the anecdotes and the legends connected with each. Then he becomes tremendously nerved up, and then, in calmer mood, suddenly exclaims, after a moment's silence, "Oh, how beautiful!" A year later, the guest has forgotten everything. Not so Count Robert who, the moment he catches sight of his former visitor, inquires: "Wasn't it too beautiful?" Two years, five years, elapse—and still the same scene will take pace. Montesquiou may be said to value highly the enthusiasm of total strangers. What is more serious is the fact that he, who considers himself so tactful, has the intolerable habit of reciting his work in verse and prose to anyone whom he happens to meet! Nor does he limit these performances to a brief extract from an article, or a single madrigal or sonnet. He declaims long tirades, rhymed or unrhymed, and punctuates them with falsetto exclamations of delight and surprise, as though he had just discerned in his own works beauties comparable to those of Æschylus, Pindar, Dante and Shakespeare. At first, his listener will take it as a joke, but little by little the strained, tense attitude of the author betrays that the affair is serious—or even, as a doctor would say, alarming. A word of warning to any woman, old or young, who happens to be in the audience—especially if she is absent-minded: let her beware lest she forget to swear by the sun, the moon and the stars she has never heard anything so sublime! If she does not act thus, the poet is replaced by the satirist, who holds her hated name forever in his memory. She will be pilloried and ridiculed in a hundred poems, handed over for all time to those infernal deities who punish such crimes as incorrect spelling, badly executed embroidery, cheap perfume or imperfect hospitality. So far as the proper homage to his own talents is concerned, Robert de Montesquiou is not to be trifled with; he is a combination of Beau Brummel and Trissotin.

In spite of all this, though he is unendurable three-quarters of the time, this vociferous nobleman, this Molièresque worm, has found his imitators. Rostand and d'Annunzio, who model themselves on Montesquiou in his affectation and overweening vanity, are mere plagiarists, the plural of his singular. It is not everyone who knows how to strike attitudes, who is able to carry his own pedestal about from salon to salon and, having mounted it, to assume effective poses with a lyre of coloured nougat! Not everyone possesses the gift of being able to whinny with ecstasy at his own writings. The grotesqueness of Montesquiou is sublime, whereas the two I have just mentioned, born too late and already stale, are merely silly. We may discard des Esseintes, of "À Rebours," in drawing whose portrait Huysmans lacked wit but unhappily not credulity; and we may sum up by saying that in the feeble currency of a Byron, Pierre Loti might be a golden louis, Montesquiou a ten franc piece, and the others merely small change. Nothing is uglier than shoddy, shopworn originality, nothing stupider than a Superman of tin, a Kamchatka at the corner grocery.

At regular intervals Édouard Rod, the novelist, glided like a silent, colourless phantom into the "attic." Methodical, according to a system of his own, he made periodical calls on his more celebrated fellow-writers, from Brunetière to Goncourt—not out of servility, but from a sense of duty, as he would have made his obligatory visits if a candidate for the Académie Française. He was never in the way. He would come in, shake hands, sit down in a corner on the edge of a couch, say not a word for half an hour or an hour, nod approval, then get up and say good-bye in the same funereal fashion. One always had the feeling that he had just interred his entire family. In speaking of him, people said: "He's a most excellent fellow. Have you ever read his "La Vie Privée de Michel Tessier?" "No, I've never been able to. He writes too much like a Huguenot for my taste. But he seems an excellent sort of fellow." "He's even better than you think. Underneath, he is highly imaginative and full of all sorts of extraordinary scruples. That's what makes him so silent—the intensity of his inner life." People would exclaim, "What a fine fellow he is; perhaps next time he'll say something." But this hope was always disappointed. The next month, when the moon sat in the same quarter, Rod would appear again with the same stealthy tread. But he never spoke.

On the other hand, Georges Rodenbach knew how to keep the conversation going, and how to stimulate my father's verve. His eloquence was replete with picturesque metaphors. But his talkativeness, his desire to say a lot of things all at once, was that of one who knows he has not long to talk. If Mallarmé dropped in, with his measured gestures and half-closed eyes, the discussion that ensued would be delightful. This little magician of words, whose glances were so profound, spoke in transparent images that ranged themselves in coherent sentences. His talk, the most delightful I have ever heard, flitted like some rare bird from idea to idea. He seemed to be playing some marvellous game, producing his effects with the skill of a great artist, a great actor. A slow movement of his head or of an eyelid would convey the inexpressible.

In the little garden at Auteuil, with its delicate bronze statuettes, the twilight deepens. In the single vast room one can distinguish hazy shapes, and the gleaming tips of lighted cigarettes. This is the hour when Alphonse Daudet indulges in his most brilliant improvisations. He begins like a 'cello solo opening a symphony and drawing answers from one or other of the well-tuned instruments present, till even the most timid join in—at first shyly, as though in a confessional, and then more clearly, more surely. Others follow, one after one. Goncourt is happy. He enjoys being able to offer the rarest of all forms of hospitality—that of the intellect—he likes the feeling of being surrounded by people who are at ease in his home. The door opens. Carrière, a faintly seen silhouette, reduced to just the few essential lines, as in his own pictures, comes in. He is followed by Paul Hervieu, or someone else. Then Pélagie's niece brings in the lamp. Perhaps there is a visitor, a foreigner, an Italian, like Primoli,[1] an Englishman, like Child or Sherard, Wilde's biographer, or the correspondent of some foreign paper who has happened in on this gathering of celebrities and near celebrities and is delighted to find himself in such an assembly. The charm still holds. The newcomer is caught up in the general flow of talk, and is obliged to give his opinion on the subject under discussion. Goncourt reminds Alphonse Daudet, "Remember, we count on seeing you next Sunday."

"I'll surely be there."

"And you, Léon, old man, try to drop in towards the end of the afternoon. You'll find Fleury here and a friend of his—a very entertaining person, I'm told, a doctor who has been in all sorts of queer countries, and is going to tell us about them."

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[1] A Roman count, cousin of the Princess Mathilde.

"I certainly shall, Monsieur de Goncourt."

As it was known that Edmond de Goncourt kept a diary, each of his visitors tried to bring him some sensational bit of news to be recorded for future generations. I suspect that some of his visitors confided their secrets to him with a view to obtaining future publicity, and that their anecdotes were sometimes fictitious. Goncourt, being entirely honest himself, never suspected them. The worst offender was the novelist and short-story writer, Jean Lorrain. This author avoided the Sunday afternoon receptions, where many of the other guests had good reasons for disliking him, but made up by coming on other days of the week. Whenever Goncourt would repeat, innocently, some venomous bit of gossip about someone whom we knew, my father would say, "It must be Lorrain who told you that yarn."

"So it was—but you know he does tell the truth occasionally."

"I don't think so, Monsieur de Goncourt," I interrupted with a smile; "it would be dangerous for him if he did." As a matter of fact, where I was concerned, Lorrain was on his guard. He feared rough treatment from me, and I longed for an excuse to give it to him. I always hoped he would not descend into the land of shadows before I had had a chance to chastise him properly. But that satisfaction was denied me.

It would take too long to enumerate all the people who came to the famous "attic." At the beginning, these gatherings of writers, artists and journalists were rather formal and artificial, but later they became most agreeable. My father saw to it that they never degenerated into those discussions "for men only" which I always despised. What more hideous sight can there be than a number of old roués commenting on the works of the Marquis de Sade, reciting licentious verses with sensual gestures or, with bloodshot eyes, examining a portfolio of erotic engravings? As a former medical student and admirer of the French satirists—of whom Rabelais is the greatest—I am certainly not afraid to call a spade a spade, but senile sensuality turns my stomach. Old people should keep themselves tidy and neat.

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My most vivid recollection of being bored at a social function is connected with the drawing-room of the Princess Mathilde, daughter of Jerome Bonaparte and cousin of Napoleon III. I dined once at her house in the rue de Berri, and I attended three evening receptions there—four unforgettable evenings. When I complained to Edmond de Goncourt how profoundly disappointed I had been, he replied, sadly: "You are seeing it too late, my boy. It's like a very old ship; even the rats have left it."

The Princess—to whom, for some reason which I never could understand, people always referred as an impressive figure—was a stout, elderly lady, with a countenance imperious rather than imperial, who made the mistake of wearing low-necked gowns. Some of her remarks had a certain rough humour about them—as, for instance, the famous exclamation, "Once upon a time we had a military man in our family." Although she had known Taine, Renan and Sainte-Beuve, she remained heavy and curt in her conversation. When I met her, she had little to say, and she eyed her guests, one after the other, with bovine and mistrustful glances. She was right to be mistrustful. Less than ten minutes after sitting down at her cold and formal dinner table, I became aware of a very violent flirtation going on between Claudius Popelin, the "intimate of the house," and a young lady-in-waiting to the Princess. Old friends of the latter discussed this affair with indignation, as though it were a betrayal of Baucis by her Philemon. Indeed, two camps sprang up, the Mathildians and the Popelinists. Edmond de Goncourt belonged to the former. As the confidant of the Princess, he went so far as to remonstrate with the one-time etcher, who made matters worse by taking the affair with a Napoleon-like seriousness. Never has a misdemeanor at Court been more severely commented on than the behaviour of poor Popelin, with his Roman name and wretchedly ordinary face. It was said that Ganderax, the best hearted of men, used to weep about it, at night, into his black beard, and the affair made Primoli—whom most things amused—quite melancholy, for a while.

At the same dinner, Edmond de Goncourt, who wished me to make a good impression, asked me to tell the story of a practical joke which we had recently played at the hospital. I told it badly, and no one was amused. A vast enveloping boredom poured down from the ceiling. It smothered all—the table, covered with eagles, cut glass and flowers, the guests laboring to make animate this graveyard of what had once been a brilliant society, the hostess already absent from earthly concerns, the stout calves of the servants. The guests struggled, as one does in a nightmare, to find topics for polite and general conversation; but their attempts lanquished and died while the enamoured Claudius and the ungrateful young lady-in-waiting continued to exchange glances charged with explosives.

At last, the meal was over! As far as the viands were concerned, it had been elaborate, but poor. The fish, without either sauce or flavor, looked like a chop, while the roast, served in a sort of muddy juice, made you think the ox had spent his last night sitting in the middle of a marsh. Do you like the Napoleonic style of furniture? I abhor it. At the Princess Mathilde's, all the armchairs, which were family heirlooms, looked as though they had come from Malmaison; table-legs had waists like an Empire gown. Eagles and bees were everywhere. The unfortunate guests invited to the reception strolled in by ones and twos like convicts, or wanderers in Purgatory. Assuming expressions as gloomy as those of the persons who had dined there—and who, consequently, were still hungry—they gathered in corners, whispering among themselves as though afraid to disturb some invisible corpse. The guilty Popelin decided to mingle with the other guests. I watched the scene—deaf, as usual, to Henry Houssaye, author of "1814" and "Waterloo," explaining with vehemence and with many technical phrases, the battle of Jena to a retired general, with a lead-colored complexion, who was either drowsy or entirely asleep, and a little, skinny woman, who looked most unhappy. Popelin inquired if I knew Doctor Potain. The latter was my teacher, but I replied, in order to avoid an exchange of perfectly futile phrases, that I had never heard of him. Popelin seemed surprised and crossed the room to refer the matter to Edmond de Goncourt, curled up in a cushioned armchair next to some people wearily making an effort to play cards.

The most curious thing about this devilish house was that, in conformity with court etiquette, no one dared to be the first to say good-night. Voices grew more and more hushed, as in the palace of the Sleeping Beauty. Enormous men-servants, also "style Empire," and the fattest and tallest I have ever seen anywhere, went about carrying logs, trays, candelabra, eagles in bronze and in plaster. As they did so, they seemed to exchange sly, mysterious winks. There seemed no apparent reason for their rearrangement of these various objects. Perhaps they did it to make the guests believe we were still in the land of the living, or perhaps they were somnambulistic furniture movers.

Finally, on the stroke of twelve, the Princess laid aside the piece of Empire embroidery on which she had been working with a pair of Empire needles, pushed back the embroidery frame decorated with an eagle's head, bowed to everyone, and retired, as though she had found the evening perfectly usual and agreeable. At once these groups of people who were entirely indifferent to one another unstuck themselves from the chairs, the sofas, and the armchairs. Everybody said good-night to everybody else, and expressed the hope that they would meet again shortly. Popelin had resumed his flirtation. The guests said good-bye to him in an affectionately reproachful manner. I wanted to whisper, "Be careful; we all know what you are up to." Probably he would not have understood, absorbed as he was in his own amorous thoughts.

I returned a couple of times to receptions at the rue de Berri. Once, I remember, I was with Maurice Barrès. The imperial household had become infested by Jews and Jewesses. Claudius Popelin had disappeared. The boredom was as great as ever. Ganderax and his luxurious beard had become more important. Frédéric Masson—who had also been present when I dined there—had, curiously enough, grown in stature, and had become white haired as he grew more stoop shouldered. He looked like one of those grotesque "gayants" of our northern provinces which frighten children. It was a few months before the death of Edmond de Goncourt, who had remained at Auteuil on account of his grippe. Princess

Mathilde had not changed, except that she had become perhaps a little more absent minded. She seemed as fossilized as the carved and chiselled eagles that continued to encumber her funereal drawing-room.

CHAPTER VII

Hauteville House After Hugo's Death—The Pettiness of a Great Man—My First Visit to London—Henry Irving and Sir James Paget.

ON several occasions I spent considerable time at Hauteville House, the grey and gloomy mansion in which Victor Hugo lived during his exile in Guernsey. The first of these visits took place in 1885, a few months after the poet's death. I remember it perfectly, and can still see Georges Hugo, Payelle (the novelist's secretary), and myself respectfully examining the annotations in the miscellaneous volumes that comprised the library, in a room on the top floor known as the "lookout." The shadow of a mighty presence still clung to these solemn relics. The mournful voice of the wind seemed charged with moaning that mounted to a mighty, triumphal tumult. Ghosts of sadness and melancholy, of wrath, of arduous labor, of love and suspicion, flitted up and down the stairways hung with heavy, torn tapestry. The hard-hearted old man, with his flamboyant vocabulary, his subtle and grandiloquent hypocrisy, his constantly renewed desires, still haunted these rooms where, like a caged lion, he had yawned, complained, and snarled. And there beside him was his family, sunk in a sombre bondage. There was his wife, at first broken-hearted over the proximity of Juliette Drouet but finally becoming used to it (Hugo always expected people to become used to things); there was Adèle, too, the daughter who went mad, the result of heredity and unhappy love. Poor Adèle, born in 1830, is now (1914) eighty-four, and has been in confinement for more than fifty years. There were also the two sons, Charles and François, so different from each other in character, but both good-hearted and intelligent, submitting perforce to the tyranny and avarice of their father. Imagine what the family life of these four must have been! They lived in a miserly fashion, even when they might have lived otherwise, and were constantly dominated by the handsome and despotic mistress, invisible but installed almost at their own door. Juliette Drouet was an accomplished actress, a skilful intriguante, who, we may imagine, never ceased reproaching Hugo for her enforced seclusion.

The story of the slow, lingering death of this family, dependent upon, and poisoned by, a genius, would certainly have made far more interesting reading than "Les Travailleurs de la Mer"—a sort of misbegotten "Robinson Crusoe," but containing several fine landscapes—or "L'Homme qui Rit"—a dashing, rather mad piece of work—or "Les Misérables," that card index of Romanticism. Hugo was a thoroughgoing domestic tyrant, an out-and-out egoist, a combination of the avarice of Harpagon and the hypocrisy of Tartuffe, always finding some excellent excuse for his own severity or sensuality. Toward the end of his life he wrote down all his expenses in a little account-book. In this record we found at regular intervals an entry of forty francs for "charity." Upon investigation, we discovered that "charity" was simply a proof that Hugo's remarkably well-preserved natural forces had continued unimpaired until his death. So much the better for him—but what obscure instinct of charlatanism made him record these exploits as philanthropy?

This is how I found Hauteville House in 1885: On the ground floor was a vast dining-room, the walls of which were covered with beautiful, rare china, forming a gigantic "H" over the fireplace. An armchair barred by an iron chain represented "the seat of the ancestors." A figure of the Virgin holding the baby Jesus in her arms had been transformed into a "Statue of Liberty" by the following verses:

"Le peuple est petit, mais il sera grand
Dans tes bras sains, ô mère féconde;
O Liberté sainte au pas conquérant,
Tu portes l'enfant qui porte le monde." [1]

Here we have a typical example of Hugo's stupidity. Just as he broke up fine old antiques which he discovered in junkshops, in order to make extraordinarily shaped pieces of furniture, so, with a serene indecency, he altered the original, true meanings of symbols and objects to make them fit his own ideas or personality. At Hauteville House, just after his death, it was easy to discern the way in which he believed the universe was constructed. A misty deity floated about somewhere in space; immediately beneath Him was the earth, governed by a handful of leaders. The latter were beneficent if they happened to be writers, maleficent if they were warriors. In the midst of the former, greater than any of them all, was Victor Hugo. Below the leaders were the masses, well meaning and enlightened, but oppressed by kings, emperors, and priests. The game consisted in having Hugo, the representative of the elect, break the chains which enslaved the masses. This he did verbally, every morning from five o'clock until noon, without stopping.

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[1] ("Humanity is young, but it will grow in thy arms, O life-giving mother. Holy Liberty, with thy conquering stride, thou art holding the child who upholds the world.")

On the ground floor there were a billiard-room; the so-called "tapestry" drawing-room decorated with portraits of the family by Louis Boulanger (including one of Madame Hugo with her broad forehead and her placid eyes); and a little room with a Flemish picture of miscellaneous devils, in the manner of Breughel the elder. This last greatly interested Georges Hugo and myself, then in our youth. On the first floor were two handsome drawing-rooms. One in red had fine jet embroidery, representing fables, and a silk damask canopy supported by six life-sized statues of slaves holding torches in their other hands. The other drawing-room was in blue; it was simpler in decoration and was continued by a terrace looking out to sea.

On the second floor was the oak gallery in carved wood, next to the "bed chamber of Garibaldi," where the famous Italian had never slept, for the best of reasons. Above this was the glass-enclosed "lookout." This consisted of three narrow rooms, stiflingly hot in summer and bitterly cold in winter, adorned with panels representing the legend of the handsome Pécopin. It was here that Hugo worked, and slept on a mattress laid on the floor. He lived in a state of perpetual inspiration, constantly possessed by all the demons of rhyme, metaphor and syntax, and trying to exorcize them either by writing or drawing on bits of paper of every conceivable form and colour. His method as an artist, not unlike that which he employed as a poet, consisted of throwing some ink upon paper and modelling and shaping it in accordance with the blot thus formed; the high lights were the spaces where the ink had not spattered. This system had the disadvantage of obliging him to make always the same kind of picture, a succession of castles seen by moonlight, criminals dangling from gallows also seen by moonlight, and grotesque beings with long beards.

While we continued our inventory of the amazing skeleton of the Plesiosaurus of Guernsey, we came across a large number of portraits of Hugo and his family. They were mostly on glass—what are called daguerreotypes. In many of them Hugo appeared as he was in his prime—very different from the patriarch surrounded by his grandchildren, the image of the poet which posterity has preserved. Imagine a vast, swelling brow, the forehead of a heredo;[1] beneath, a hard, clean-shaven face with thin lips; the expression that of a renegade priest or of an actor; between the brow and the rest of the face, holding them together, two implacable blue eyes, observers of life as it is; below, a sturdy, short body, capable of bearing heavy burdens, including that of the passing years. There you have the powerful being whom the Imperial government had condemned to loneliness and inner contemplation, as he appeared before senile decay softened his features.

In our explorations we came across certain large envelopes, sealed in black wax with Hugo's seal, a griffin. These contained secret messages to various persons, to whom we conscientiously turned them over. Hugo kept a meticulously exact record of his life, all arranged and labelled, for the benefit of posterity. He visualized the latter as a sort of supreme court before which he wished to appear to the best advantage. Certain marks, which only he could understand, told him of the contents of these envelopes. Lost up here, between sea and sky, for seventeen years in the glass cage of his "lookout," he must have written and meditated enormously. This would account for the number of his posthumous works. Some of them—those not founded on actual fact—are empty repetitions of what he had recorded elsewhere; others, however, are fresh and exact reports of things he saw or knew at first hand, and are very interesting.

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[1] This term, "heredo," is applied by Léon Daudet to persons with a hereditary disease, generally syphilis. (Translator's note.)

Between the wall and the low book-cases, under the tables, in the cupboards, were flocks of loose sheets, pages torn out of books, old envelopes, all covered every way with maxims, notes, comments, epigrams. All were written in a bold, sensual handwriting that reminded one of a troupe of naked fauns, dashing along untrammelled in a wild debauch of the imagination. We picked up as many of these fragments as we could, but there were always more. Every morning Georges and I would discover new hiding places filled with bundles of papers, all tied up and labelled "For Toto"; "For Dedèle"; "For Vacquerie." These three prisoners, living under the same roof had quarrelled perpetually, sulked and become reconciled in the orthodox French manner. They wrote letters to one another from morning till night, and also corresponded with their hosts, the guests and the visitors. I have since wondered what there can have been in these epistles written by Hugo to Vacquerie during the latter's visits to Guernsey—what these two, bound together like the Royalists thrown into the Loire during the Revolution, can have had left to say to each other after all their talks together. One must remember, however, that Hugo was a lay preacher, always in the pulpit, and that he was never tired of describing his own character, though he never once, in all the course of his long life, seems to have asked himself, "What sort of man am I?" Rather he hypnotized himself by continually repeating, "What a marvellous person I am!" I fancy that his verbal facility, at which he never ceased to wonder, kept him in this state of perpetual self-admiration. Spending all his days writing and drawing, this monster—in the Latin sense of the word—read very little. His miscellaneous library consisted of odd, unimportant works. These he would look at, annotate, close, reopen, and occasionally make use of. For example, there were a couple of volumes dealing with the Royalist revolt in Brittany during the Revolution. I have forgotten the name of the author. We came across the volumes, under a pile of dust, one afternoon. In them was mentioned the fact that the conspirators used to fell trees to make artificial clearings in which to hold their meetings. This detail had attracted Hugo's attention, and in the margin he had written the famous lines:

"Dieu, quel sinistre bruit font dans le crépuscule
Les chênes qu'on abat pour le bûcher d'Hercule."[1]

From volumes of travel, geography, or statistics, the novelist picked figures, characteristic incidents, and especially strange-sounding proper names. He delighted in unexpected consonances, in similarities and dissimilarities of words alike in form but unlike in meaning.

Every now and then, behind some book, or otherwise buried under the ashes of the past, we would come across a slipper, a hat, a cane, labelled "Slipper I wore during my first trip to Belgium"; "Hat I had on when I came back from Cobo to Belleport"; "Cane with which (on such and such a date) I called on Monsieur Dupin." Hugo considered that his least gesture had an importance extending to his wearing apparel. Even without excepting Châteaubriand, the Exile of Guernsey was the greatest "I" of the entire nineteenth century. These hunts for treasure-trove took up almost all of our time. We were up to our necks in relics. Under the influence of these surroundings I conceived the ambitious idea of writing a study of a genius, which should show him in relation to his surroundings and should describe the effect which his presence had on those about him. It was not until eight years later, in 1893, that, being again at Hauteville House, I wrote "L'Astre Noir." I did my best to give it the semblance of fiction, but when Lockroy—who, incidentally, detested Hugo and was detested by him—read the proof sheets, there was a fine row!

Hauteville House seemed predestined to witness conflicts, and would have been an admirable setting for Édouard Estaunié's fine novel, "Les Choses Parlent." Of course, we found piles and piles of tiny note-books containing descriptions of the famous spiritualistic séances that took place either around the little one-legged table which had belonged to Madame de Girardin, or around those in the red and blue drawing-rooms. The simplemindedness of the investigators seems to have been very marked as it usually is in such cases, for the "dear spirit" expressed itself like Charles Hugo, Vacquerie or Hugo himself, in an unmistakable manner. The involuntary charlatanism of the "subconscious" appeared here in all its splendour, and, as everybody knows, it is this charlatanism that forms the foundations of the "science of the great beyond." Spiritism always has seemed to me to be a state of insanity or semi-insanity shared by several persons at the same time. Its component parts are one-third voluntary or involuntary delusion, one-third conscious trickery, one-third misdirected sexuality. To my mind, it belongs in the domain of psychopathology, and is a very dangerous pastime. The devil has a finger in it, since it may easily lead to out-and-out madness or to all sorts of mental disorders. A tragic and true book could be written about the harm that has come from table-tapping to those who have ventured to play at it. Considering the quantities of "messages" we found, the so-called "communication with the dead" seems to have been a favourite pastime at Hauteville House during the long evenings of the island winters. How bored those poor people must have been!

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[1] "O, God, how mournful at dusk is the sound of the oaks hewn down for Hercules's pyre!"

Hugo's licentiousness was methodical. He devoted so many hours a day to his lady fair, just as he did so many to his family and so many to his work and to exercise. I have already written that the house of Juliette Drouet was only about twenty yards away from Hauteville House, in the same street. It was furnished in the same pseudo-medieval fashion. Thus, even when he was away from home, Hugo found himself in the familiar surroundings. Zola, who copied Hugo in everything and piled up his manure in keeping with the laws and canons of the Romanticists, late in life arranged his existence along quite similar lines. One may wonder whether this hypocritical, sentimental, extra-conjugal duality is not a part, or a result, of a purely verbal affection for "right" and "the people," whether mysterious threads do not join it to the burlesque gospel of "humanitarianism."

Hugo, "the uprooted tree," as he called himself, and "the France which gave me birth," were in frequent communication in fine weather, but not during the stormy season. The crossing is a rough one, and the boats of 1860 were not so well equipped as they are now. Nevertheless, his personal friends came to see him, and he also received visits from admiring readers, political supporters, bores on whom he showered sententious maxims duller even than the bores themselves, and persons trying to borrow money. The latter he turned away. He kept up a steady correspondence with certain politicians, and every time anyone sent him a book or a collection of verses he would reply by a grandiloquent epistle. In this way he maintained his celebrity. The other exiles annoyed him with their requests for financial assistance. He was not always able to refuse, although to comply with them was most painful.

The sixty families that made up the local, aboriginal aristocracy of Guernsey left the "grand old man" severely alone. They were disgusted by his conduct, which promptly became notorious, and his political theories alarmed them. Hugo was much hurt by this attitude. All his life he dreamt of possessing titles, a coat-of-arms, the gold chains of knightly orders, and his father left him only the doubtful title of Count of Cogoluedo. He wanted these aristocratic adornments so that he might renounce them with a dramatic gesture or spit on them publicly, like his absurd Guymplaine in "L'Homme qui Rit." It was unbearable that these little Anglo-Norman landowners dared slam their doors on a genius. He took his revenge by inviting the poor children who lived in the neighbourhood to family festivities and distributing among them toys and clothes. For, in spite of all his silly antics and his sessions of "black magic," Hugo was always sincerely fond of little children. Indeed, he is one of the few French authors who has known how to describe them as they really are—and not picture them, as did the writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as grown-ups on a smaller scale.

He was fond of publishers also, but he liked them well cooked, as an ogre might. The unfortunate Lacroix discovered this when he ruined himself with the triumph of "Les Misérables." Hugo had drawn up a contract guaranteed to make Lacroix starve for the rest of his life. Great lay philanthropists have always known how to defend their personal interests. The savings bank account is the silver lining of their cloudy visions.

From what I saw and heard of Hugo's two sons, they seem to have been very likable, each in his own way. François was a student, phlegmatic on the surface, sentimental at heart. To escape from the boredom of exile, he embarked upon that vast undertaking, the translation of Shakespeare, which he was able to complete satisfactorily, thanks to his lively intelligence and perfect knowledge of English. Charles Hugo was a man who liked to live well. He was of a fiery and combative nature; inactivity wore him out and killed him before he had a chance to show what he might have done. He left a couple of clever books, such as "La Bohème Dorée" and "La Chaise de Paille." Those who knew him agree that he had more in him than appeared in his published writings. The father of these two men acted on them like a diving bell. He absorbed all the air about them. Besides, his great preoccupation was to avoid spending anything on their maintenance.

Regarding Hugo's notorious stinginess, Madame Edmond Adam —who, as I have said elsewhere, is generosity itself—tells a characteristic story. After the war of 1870, the Republicans had planned means by which Henri Rochefort might escape from the penal settlement of New Caledonia. Twenty thousand francs were needed to insure the success of the enterprise. Madame Adam undertook to collect them from persons whom she knew. She called on Hugo, and laid the case before him. He listened gravely, then said, as he opened a drawer of his table, "Look for yourself; I haven't a single farthing."

"Not here, perhaps; but surely somewhere else——?"

"Elsewhere, it is the same."

It took an hour's argument to prove to him that the absence of his name from the list of contributions to this particular cause would be positively scandalous. Finally, lamenting and complaining as he did so, he handed his visitor a thousand-franc note. As Rochefort adored and admired Hugo, Madame Adam never told him this edifying incident.

Was Hugo brave? To me, courage is the fundamental require-ment in any man. I do not believe Hugo possessed it. In his "Histoire d'un Crime," an account of his adventures during the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon, we see him very actively exhorting others to resist, buzzing about here and there, hurrying from Schoelcher to Charras, and from the workman Charamol to the place where the latest news could be had. At the same time he slips away the minute he fancies that anything really serious is going to happen. In this book there is a laborer armed with a musket. He declares, "All goes well; the leaders have their scarf of office, the workmen have their guns." I have always felt that the man expressed the voice of Hugo's own conscience. Again, when someone asked Hugo where he might surely be found, he replied, proudly, but vaguely, "Wherever I happen to be." Hugo's complete mental confusion, his timidity are apparent on every page of this burlesque epic, in which the writer invents a conflict and massacres which never occurred. The reader must understand me—I do not say that Hugo was cowardly, but that he was averse to taking risks. He had nothing of the popular leader in his make-up. The only adventurous episodes in his career were amorous ones. His amorousness, his egoism and his meanness were the three weaknesses of his character.

What his detractors and his critics have overlooked, or have failed to estimate properly, was the abnormal, the positively monstrous distance that separated his emotional and imaginative from his critical and intellectual abilities. The former were almost infinite in extent and diversity, the latter were atrophied and disconcertingly childish. Hugo indeed hid the poverty of his intellect under the most sumptuous mantle of words that can be imagined. But an observer can see in the conflicts between dwarfs and giants, misshapen beings and perfect athletes, which one finds in his pages, an exteriorization of this lack of mental equilibrium, this inner antithesis. Furthermore, on account of his tremendous influence, his prominence, the number of his imitators and disciples, and even of his critics, this phycho-moral weakness of his became the most serious weakness in the whole Romantic movement, that oratorical abortion which led astray politically two and a half generations of Frenchmen. For it is worth noting how the victims of "Les

Châtiments," Napoleon III and his advisers, had exactly the same mental deficiencies as those who attacked them and whom they exiled. The man who brought about the unity of Italy, and the unity of Germany after Sedan, was simply a Romantic who wore a crown. Émile Ollivier was to Napoleon what Auguste Vacquerie was to Hugo. The period from 1850 to 1870 saw the triumph of the same absurd theories in the fields of both politics and literature.

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Guernsey is not far from London. Hence, even before I became, for a short time, a member of Hugo's family,[1] I had the opportunity of visiting the British capital, either going or coming by way of Southampton and Havre. When quite young I had read Dickens, De Quincey and Stevenson, who have reproduced better than any others the tragic yet domestic impression produced by the great ant-heap of London with its ochre-colored fogs, its black and red smoke. It was intoxicating to discover Oxford Street, "that stony hearted stepmother," as the learned and sagacious opium-eater calls it. In every passing face I sought Anne, the little prostitute who offered the fainting poet a glass of spiced port, sweet Florence Dombey, or poor Nancy, so foully murdered by the horrible Bill Sikes. I imagined that in every cottage was being enacted the horrible metamorphosis of kind Dr. Jekyll into evil Mr. Hyde. Hardly had I arrived for the first time at Charing Cross—I was with Lockroy at the time, and it was a dull, yellow afternoon—when I recognized the houses, the street corners, even the lamp-posts. I believe I could have found my way blindfolded to the site of the Globe Theatre, where Shakespeare and his company gave their performances. Scientists have bestowed the pompous name of paramnesia on this sensation of having already seen something which one is seeing for the first time. I have repeatedly experienced it. Great writers, such as Shakespeare, Dickens, Stevenson and De Quincey, even when they do not describe minutely particular settings or neighbourhoods, make them real to us by the intensity of the narrative, the chiaroscuro, and the sweep of the dialogue. Their analysis of the human mind conveys at one and the same time the colour of the weather and the time of the day. In a reply, an exclamation, they make one visualize an entire landscape. I can see Cæsar's house, down to the minutest detail, when he says he can read a despatch there by the light of the meteors. The plaintive song of Desdemona, a few minutes before she is smothered, told me long before my first trip to Venice, just where her palace was situated on the Grand Canal and gave me a glimpse of the gingerbread decorations of its façade. I know Macbeth's castle as well as though I had spent a vacation there, on account of the swallow's nest in the corner of the roof. The sight of the real Castle of Elsinore, reflected in the rigid, gloomy mirror of the Sound in a freezing twilight of deep winter, told me no more about it than I had already found in the pages of "Hamlet." In short, without wishing to exaggerate, I hold that great poems are filled with minute topographical detail, that they contain exact pictures of things as they are.

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[1] Daudet's first wife was Jane Hugo, one of the poet's grandchildren; they were divorced.

Some months after my first visit to London, I again spent several weeks there. I was still accompanied by Lockroy and Victor Hugo's family. We stopped at the Alexandra Hotel, opposite Hyde Park. Charles Floquet, a prominent politician (later involved in the Panama scandals), joined us there. He was accompanied by his secretary, Pascal, an insignificant little man whom Floquet treated as a servant. Floquet was a harmless fool, and comically pretentious. He was rather good looking, with the face of a stage lawyer, and he believed that he resembled Robespierre. He and Lockroy had just been successful in the elections for the legislature, in Paris, and considered themselves all-important. They had formed some sort of political alliance, to which they alluded with mysterious and malicious winks. Lord Rosebery, at that time in office, having invited them "and their suite" to a gala reception of some sort, we were all delighted to go. I remember a vast and magnificent private mansion, gentlemen wearing all sorts of decorations, Indians in their native costumes, uniforms of many colours, "How do?" "And you?" repeated hundreds of times by tall, thin men and by ladies who had the faces of either angels or aged acrobats. The minister, clean-shaven and smiling, and wearing short breeches, looked quite a young man, although he was already about forty. He did not seem to know just who his French guests were, and he probably took Lockroy and Floquet for Hugo's two sons, for several times he expressed to them his sympathy for their bereavement, shaking them affectionately by both hands as he did so. The two accomplices bowed, then bowed again, and adopted such melancholy attitudes that the other members of the cabinet came over and also expressed their sympathy. When the decease of Hugo, which had taken place some little time previously, had been sufficiently regretted, everyone felt better, and we were taken to the buffet. Here we saw some inordinately tall women devouring their food with a brutal appetite, champing their jaws as they did so. Someone told me, smilingly, that they belonged to the German embassy. "How do?" "Wie geht es?" "And you?" Holding in one solid fist their little plates piled high with provender, the fork stuck between the index and the middle finger, they shook hands vigorously with the other, in a way that nearly put one's shoulder out of joint. We watched these stalwart amazons with amusement.

In the meantime, Floquet and Lockroy had asked the Chief of Police to take them on a slumming trip. Scotland Yard detailed three policemen, Cook, Bob, and Fred, as an escort for us. These three giants, our guides and protectors, were accompanied by an inspector with spiteful eyes. I accompanied the party, as did also Georges Hugo and Payelle. The most entertaining feature of the evening—for naturally, we were shown only perfectly law-abiding criminals—was the extreme funk of Charles Floquet. He took care to have his little secretary, Pascal, go before or behind him, according to where the gallows-birds happened to be sitting. The youth thus offered up as a predestined victim held his legs together in a most comical manner, but did not dare to disobey his master. In this way we visited various "bad joints," as thoroughly faked as similar places in Paris, where our escorts nodded to various guaranteed pickpockets and alleged "Jack the Rippers" on the look-out for shillings. I can recall a lodging house for sailors. It was fitted up like a three-masted vessel, linen was drying on ropes attached to the masts, and the whole thing had a most original appearance.

It was an apt occasion for quoting the famous saying, "England is an island," and Lockroy did not miss his chance. Having already in his mind the debates on the budget, and the post of secretary of the navy, he questioned, through an interpreter, the old sea-dogs who slept there, and he received their answers with wide-eyed seriousness, as though they held the secrets of England's maritime supremacy. Lockroy, like many another man, was nothing but an unsuccessful *poseur*.

But a successful *poseur*, the celebrated actor Henry Irving, was just then appearing as Mephistopheles in "Faust," with Ellen Terry as Marguerite. The scenery and the stage management were magnificent, and impressed us greatly. I never met Irving personally, but, from the stories which I heard, he appears to have been a man of limited imagination and colossal conceit. He was an actor who fancied himself a gentleman. His Mephistopheles reminded us of a drawing-room conjuror in red cloth, extremely pompous and, with a limp, as in Delacroix' drawings, and without real dignity. The theare-going public in England is rather childish, on the whole. It is satisfied to be shown the surfaces of people and things, and does not care to seek anything more profound. In Paris, before the systematic conquest of the theatre by the Jews and the invasion of foreigners, audiences were much more intelligent and mature.

A letter from Professor Charcot served us as an introduction to his famous friend Sir James Paget. The latter invited Georges Hugo and me to lunch at his classically Londonesque house. Two of his students and a couple of old maids, relatives of his, were also present. As we sat down, he said to us, "Those seats have often been occupied by Darwin and Huxley." The authors of "The Origin of Species" and "The Crayfish" were intimate friends of Paget. The latter brought out in our honour a bottle of very old Bordeaux which was quite stale and which, according to the English custom, was served in very small liqueur glasses, like medicine. Everyone maintained a polite silence, for no one had anything to say, and we had the feeling that myriads of miles separated us from this surgical and, in part, medical celebrity. I could not very well ask Sir James just then for details regarding progressive necrosis of the bone, the so-called "Paget's disease."

The famous surgeon invited us to visit his hospital on the following day. He delivered his lecture—it happened to be on "Charcot's disease"—very simply, in a small, bright hall, while his students made notes. He spoke slowly, making precise gestures with his long, satiny fingers. We did not understand a single word of what he said. When he touched the knee-pan or the elbow of the patient who lay in front of him on an operating table, each of his students came forward and felt the grey, loose flesh at the same spot. As a first-year medical student, I was enthusiastic over the sight. Georges Hugo, more artistically inclined, preferred the friezes from the Parthenon, at the British Museum. Since then I have come to share his point of view—and nowadays I wouldn't go out of my way for any lateral amyotrophic sclerosis, even though it were being handled by the great James Paget. One's tastes change in the course of time.

Lockroy had a bosom friend in London, just as he would have had one in Monomotapa. Monsieur E. had for many years been giving French lessons to the natives, and had become entirely anglicized himself, to such an extent that everything his old friend told him about French politics seemed strange and new to him. He clapped his hands, as though at the theatre, when told of the progress of democracy, a thing of which his hosts had not the slightest conception, thereby proving the inferiority of English as compared with French institutions. In spite of this fact, he adopted their ways, their language, their trick of laughing sideways and looking up in astonishment while keeping both hands flat on the table cloth. These contradictions shocked us. E. told us that the amazing development of the English furniture business—those were the days when Maple was just becoming known—was due to the following incident: Immediately after the Commune, a number of expert furniture and cabinet makers from the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, who had been mixed up in the movement, emigrated to London. The skill of these workmen, in conjunction with the æsthetic theories of William Morris and his group, had brought about a kind of renaissance in decorative art. I do not know whether this explanation is correct, but at the time it appeared plausible. Since 1886 we have had a craze for æsthetic furniture which is now diminishing, and we are returning to a more sane conception of what is comfortable in the way of chairs, tables, and chests.

CHAPTER VIII

The Medical Profession in Paris Thirty Years Ago—An Intimate Picture of Professor Charcot.

IT is hard to realize to-day the awe with which the materialistic world of thirty years ago regarded physicians and medicine generally. The "healer" was said to have taken the place of the priest. The heads of the medical schools and the organizers of "cures" and "treatments" enjoyed great moral and social influence. People looked on them as exceptional beings, free from the infirmities and passions of ordinary mortals, always entirely disinterested, frequently heroic and sometimes sublime in their devotion to their profession. Pillars of the republic, possessed of all the official honors and degrees the government could confer, they held in their hands the secrets of families and the virtue of women, and held the menace of heredity over the heads of little children. The physicians ruled, partly by guile, partly by terror. A little later the vogue of the surgeons, with their miraculous, frequently entirely unnecessary, operations, completed the omnipotence of the torturers of human flesh. Scalpel-men and druggists alike, petted and spoiled, took advantage of their position. Financially, they exploited their patients and their dupes, while in the intellectual field they pretended to extend the domain of their craft to embrace philosophy, and to rule the soul as they did the body. I knew the whole outfit very well indeed, as for seven years I studied at the school of medicine and have been an out-student and later an interne in hospitals. Thus I became intimate with the lords of science. Lest my criticism of them seem harsh, let me say that it is based on fact. When my book, "Les Morticoles," appeared in 1894, it was regarded as a sensational pamphlet. In the light of what I have learned since, I consider it far too mild. In that volume I lifted a corner of the veil; now I intend to rend it.

In the first place, the manner in which the faculty of medicine is organized has not been changed since 1886 and is so centralized as to be despotic and tyrannical. At the bottom we find the masses —in other words, a sort of proletariat of the medical profession. This has now been invaded by a host of foreigners and undesirables, among whom competition is intense. At the top are a series of mandarins, the survivors of constantly repeated tests and examinations. These dignitaries hate one another at heart, but join in oppressing those who seek advancement and fame. Between the mandarins and the masses are crowds of students, humble and submissive, forbidden to have either initiative or personality of their own. If they succeed—that is, if they keep in favor with the powers that be—they gain admission to the higher regions. If they fail, they are expelled into that outer darkness inhabited by the anonymous horde of "chase-your-patients" and "belly-openers."

There are also outside influences which elevate thorough incompetents to lecture platforms and laboratories, thanks to political or social connections with government officials or with the wives of government officials. Thus, you may well wonder how a young man, competent but without money, influence, or servility, can ever force his way through the tightly packed ranks of schemers and office-holders.

Such a state of affairs explains the extraordinarily rapid decline of France in a branch of science in which it was formerly supreme, thanks to such men as Laënnec, Duchenne de Boulogne, Morel of Rouen, Claude Bernard, Charcot and Potain, not to mention the great Pasteur. The latter has a place by himself, but his Institute also is rapidly falling to pieces. The foregoing proves once again the saying, "Institutions corrupt men."

I never even suspected these facts in the last quarter of 1885, when I entered my name with Puppin, the agreeable secretary of the school of medicine. I had three famous patrons and sponsors, namely Professor Charcot, a friend of Alphonse Daudet and father of my friend, Jean Charcot, who is to-day an arctic explorer; Professor Potain, our family physician for many years, and Péan, the surgeon who had treated me, when I was a mere child, for a synovial cyst on the knee.

Charcot, although his forehead was too low, had the straight features of a stout Napoleon. I fancy that this resemblance, which he accentuated, influenced his habits and his career. I never knew a man who tyrannized more over those about him. One could see this at table, where he kept glancing suspiciously at his students, and interrupting them harshly. He was bull-necked and clean-shaven. His mouth formed a hard, thoughtful arch, and his cheeks were heavy. He wore his hair brushed flat back off his face. His figure was thickset, and he walked heavily on short, stout legs. When at rest, he would play with his eye-glasses, displaying a handsome but rather limp and cold hand. He spoke in an imperious voice, low and a little acid. His tone was frequently rather ironical and insistent. His eyes held a remarkable fire.

As an observer, Charcot was a positive genius. He noted infallibly the connection between the minds and the bodies of his patients, discovering diseases while they were still latent, vices which their victims would not admit. He summed up the results of his observations in brief sentences that were comparable to the drawings of Ingres, or the sketches of a Forain or a Goya. When he wanted the ladies to leave the room, Charcot would say, "The clinic is now open," and begin a story. "He was one of my most famous brother practitioners—a German—and he had taken a long trip to explain his case to me. It wasn't a very amusing case, either. A sudden and very marked sexual perversion brought on by having looked too long at a little bronze faun, of the renaissance period, that stood on his desk." Then Charcot added, with a smile, "You see, gentlemen, masterpieces frequently secrete a poison of their own," and then, after a pause, "Very frequently, indeed."

His learning was immense. He knew thoroughly the works of the great poets, especially Æschylus, Dante, and Shakespeare, and those of several philosophers, especially Greeks, as well as European painting. He admired Beethoven, but detested Wagner, whom he considered, not altogether erroneously, as being overemphatic and long-winded. Pitiless towards human beings, he was tender towards animals, spoiling his big and little dogs as though they were children, and forbidding anyone to talk in his presence of hunting. When he touched on the subject of science, it lost its distant, artificial character, and became something vital and dramatic, affecting everyday life. Entirely absorbed by the plastic beauty of his art and the development of its fundamental laws, he disdained therapeutic intervention; he looked on the various disorders that afflict the human body in the same detached manner in which an astronomer regards the movements of the planets. He shared, too, in the scepticism of Montaigne. Not only was he without a creed himself, but he frequently displayed hostility toward Catholicism, considering it to be connected with reaction in politics. For some reason which I never knew—and which was perhaps equally a mystery to him—in the region of the supernatural he was attracted towards Buddha.

In politics he was a fool, and an obstinate fool at that. A fanatical supporter of Gambetta, a republican by education and environment, he believed the Revolution had liberated the masses. He declared that only one titled person had ever had any intelligence, namely, Dr. de Sinety, author of a remarkable work on the liver in nursing mothers. The son of an artisan, he himself had had a severe struggle to obtain his vast knowledge, and, extraordinarily successful master of clinical medicine that he was, he retained the mind of a high-school boy so far as the physical laws governing civic organization and the state were concerned. How furious he would have been had he witnessed the continued progress of the Action Française! I laugh when I think of it.

Charcot could not bear even the slightest contradiction. I remember that once he said to a well-known doctor who was generally disgustingly servile, but who for once did not happen to agree entirely with him: "Monsieur So-and-so, take your medicine case and get out!" The intervention of the culprit's family was necessary to secure his pardon. Unfortunately, Charcot was always ready to listen to gossip, which his envious and jealous parasites purveyed to him, especially at the time of the competitive examinations. He became petty and sometimes ferocious, in his persecution of anyone who, he believed, had treated him disrespectfully, or had dared contest any of his theories regarding the nervous system, hysteria, aphasia or the diseases of the liver and the kidneys. In such case, he left no stone unturned to ruin his opponent, and was not satisfied until he had completely crushed him or brought him to a renunciation of his heresy. This attitude earned for him the hatred of many young doctors, who hailed his death as a godsend. What pleasure can a man, famous, rich, extremely intelligent, and possessed of the rare gift of understanding, get out of playing the petty tyrant?

A tireless worker, Charcot would spend the greater part of the night studying some anatomo-pathological problem, or making a diagram or illustrative figure, as, for example, his "bell" showing the various forms of aphasia. That "bell" cost him three months of insomnia. He was never satisfied with the result of his labours. Even after the lapse of five years, in a given case, he would take up again and re-examine it, always trying to elucidate, to clarify, to resolve Nature into its fundamental elements. When Charcot lived at 217, boulevard Saint-Germain, there was a farrier's shop just behind his beautiful garden, which gave on the rue Saint-Simon. The blacksmith hammered incessantly. Like Alphonse Daudet, who lived nearby at 31, rue de Bellechasse, Charcot pretended that the regularity of the strokes of the hammer soothed him and helped him in his work. He and my father used to joke about it, saying, "Which of us will be the first not to hear our blacksmith any more?" Charcot was convinced that he would outlive his patient. Nevertheless, he was the first to go, and the author of "L'Immortel" murmured, sadly, as he filled his little pipe, "That lucky devil of a Charcot—he, at least, is at rest!"

Although stupidity always exasperated Charcot, his constant desire to be the master, the chief, caused him to surround himself with mediocrities in his own profession. Thus, contact with writers and artists was a change and a stimulant to him. He has been accused of "playing to the gallery," but the expression is too trivial to apply to such a man. As in the case of all who never humble themselves in prayer, he was denied the incomparably luxury of realizing his feebleness in the face of the great problems. He lacked the final touch of moral greatness, the greatness of a Pascal. What a curious being he was, and how diabolical a glitter shone sometimes in his eyes, dilated with having witnessed so many terrible sights!

He was generous, even lavish, and entertained sumptuously. He adored his son and daughters, who returned his affection, and he was extremely tolerant of the laughter, racket, songs, and games with which we made his house resound. If the latter was an inferno for nervous patients, it was a paradise for youngsters. When he lived in the Hotel de Chimay, on the Quai Malaquais, as well as in his house on the boulevard Saint-Germain, we would dash in and out of the drawing rooms and pay no attention to the morose, uneasy patients, accompanied by doctors or nurses, sitting in the armchairs and on the sofas. Those were the days of the vogue of pseudo-medieval furniture, stained-glass windows, embossed leather, much-repaired tapestries—anything that dated back to Louis XI, Louis XII or Gothic times. Hypochondriacs and sufferers from ataxia writhed about on strangely shaped prayer-stools of the thirteenth century; patients with atrophied muscles stretched their shrivelled limbs on chairs decorated with gargoyles, griffins or armorial bearings. Imagine the effect our merry-making must have had in this infernal antique shop! It must have been a nightmare for the German, Russian, American, Turkish, English, and Polish millionaires who came to the great master for their prescriptions of nux vomica, bromides, or Lamalou water.

Charcot, before whom the entire scientific world prostrated itself, had a savage kind of humour, and frequently used expressions that were intentionally Rabelaisian. Speaking of a certain neurasthenic who had been describing his own case, he said: "I told him, 'you are like a man sitting on a dung heap with a sword suspended over his head; you must either get under the manure or lose your life.' " The choice cannot have been a pleasant one. Or he would quote between his teeth the Spanish or English proverb: "Man in the hands of the Almighty is like a fly in the hands of children; a plaything, until it is crushed." On other occasions, bearing in his hand the little hammer with which reflexes are noted, he would hum a little tune as he stood in front of his astonished patient. His unerring glance recognized a disease the moment the patient entered the room. He would say to him: "You have such and such sensations—yes, when you stand with your feet together you feel a sort of dizziness—yes, and you see things double, especially toward evening. I don't ask for any explanations from you. Just sit down and take off your shoes and trousers."

A strange thing about him was that he was shy, and his abrupt manner with women was due largely to this shyness. I noticed it frequently, and would have given anything to inquire into the sentimental and sensual sides of his life, the side which the wisest men keep most carefully concealed. But Charcot would have sent packing any such callow student of psychology as I who should have ventured to approach him on such a subject. At times, he seemed lost in some mighty dream, from which he emerged full of dissatisfaction and anger, bewildered as a traveller who has lost his path, and ready to use his learning as a terrible weapon. For thirty years he acted as a priest of the body, a priest who believes in nothing except the satisfaction and the mortality of the flesh. One of his beliefs was that the dream life or subconscious life of a person is far more important than is generally admitted, even when it is recognized as enormous. What part did the subconscious play in his own existence?

One evening, when I had lingered in his library later than I should, looking at medical volumes on the balcony which ran around his book-lined office, I was surprised by his unexpected return. Curiosity made me remain, looking down through the bars of the grating at the careworn man. He sat down by his lamp; he was all hunched up and motionless, and stared in front of him with an expression such as I had never seen on his face before. He looked both keenly alive and hopeless, as a man might look who has made a pact with the devil and is thinking of the inevitable time of reckoning. He remained thus for more than an hour. Then he left the room to give an order to his secretary. I felt chilled to my very bones. "So that's what it's like to be famous!—Not amusing, to say the least."

The library was filled with works on magic and demonolgy, and was a veritable storehouse of documents on mental disorders. An unhealthy atmosphere hung about it. Probably it did not contain any very rare items. Charcot read English, German, Spanish, and

Italian fluently; he also could read human beings, and was all attention the moment anyone brought him an exact bit of information on any subject; in other words, he used, professionally, the very best methods.

In summer he went with his family to his mouldy but pleasant little house at Neuilly Saint-James. There you could find him, on a Sunday, sitting in his five square yards of garden, reading, and commenting on what he read. "That Zola of yours is a beast, an utter beast," he would call out to my father, as he held in his hand a volume of the "Rougon-Macquart" series. He spoke well of Balzac, had little to say about Flaubert, and was always interested in the psychological or physiological in literature, but especially in what the author saw and recorded unconsciously. He said to Daudet, in connection with "L'Arlésienne," "I appreciate your putting a half-witted child in the family of a man who commits suicide over a love affair; that was a fine touch." Certainly, Charcot plunged deeper than anyone else has done into the mysteries of heredity, and it is unfortunate that he did not leave a general treatise on the subject such as only he was capable of writing.

Newspaper criticism was extremely disagreeable to him. Once a scurrilous article, inept and clumsy, appeared in the "Figaro." It was signed by a pompous idiot who called himself "Ignotus." It made Charcot angry for several weeks. I was astonished that the editor, Francis Magnard, who was generally very careful, had let so silly a thing get printed. But I, being already used to newspaper ways, found it rather ridiculous of Charcot to keep on muttering, as he attached his napkin with a little string and a pair of clips, "That Mr. Ignotus; hm, that Mr. Ignotus." I could not help thinking: "What a sensitive child there still is in this great scientist!" I learned from this that no human being is completely remarkable or extraordinary.

On Tuesday evenings, Charcot received the members of the Institute, the professors of the faculty of medicine, and their families, at his magnificent residence. There would come a procession of scholars old and young, famous or hardly known, stiff with pride, yellow with jealousy, green with hope, or red with suppressed rage—

all with smiles on their lips to salute their omnipotent patron. The latter was not taken in by their attitude. He preferred, for once, to see people who would not talk about examinations or competitions or theses. What he wanted was to listen to some good music, and to feel that people were enjoying themselves. We did what we could to carry out his wishes. Charcot would say to my father: "Stay a while after the crowd has gone. We'll have a chat while our young idiots play the fool." But those "young idiots," while eating their buttered toast and drinking a rich cup of midnight chocolate, listened with interest to the animated and highly entertaining conversation between the novelist and the physician.

Both were pleased to discover how often their observations, on two different planes of thought, met and complemented each other.

"Charcot, you are certainly endowed with second sight."

"Not a bit of it. I only stop and look at things and trace the results back to their causes. That is all. Now, then, what's this here?" He picked up from the table a copy of the "Revue des Deux Mondes," settled his eyeglasses on his nose, and looked at the table of contents, making a face as he did so. "Of course, Bosnia and Herzegovina, again. Have you ever noticed the number of articles on Bosnia and Herzegovina that appear in the 'Revue des Deux Mondes'? We can admit, now that Pailleron isn't there any more, that it's a very trite magazine."

"Naturally; Charles Buloz, the editor, is a very hollow man, though he colours his pipes very well. And Pailleron is hollow too."

It was true, the author of "Le Monde où l'on s'Ennuie" was a bore. He was very vain and went about launching heavy epigrams. He had neither spontaneity nor good nature. He was constantly surrounded by a flock of drawing-room snobs, and looked like an embittered but sentimental, blond pork butcher. He always wore a little semi-wig called a "breton." As he was rich and one of the principal stockholders in the conservative "Revue des Deux Mondes," all the contributors would applaud vigorously anything he said. The rest of us considered him a nuisance, and we were right. I might also mention that the play, "Le Monde où l'on s'Ennuie," which made him famous, is one of those mechanical, would-be daring dramas beneath whose stale jokes one senses the pretentiousness of the author. It is a satire written for clerks in department stores. It was characteristic of Pailleron that whenever he told a story at a dinner-party, he watched the expressions on the faces of the servants, and one felt that he was furiously angry if the extra footman failed to smile.

But to return to Charcot. It is a Tuesday morning, and we are at the Hôpital de la Salpêtrière. A bell rings, announcing that the chief is coming. All the members of his staff have gathered to meet him. Here is the great Babinski, with his frank, good-humoured face, his hands in the pockets of his white apron. There is Sollier, his skull cap on the back of his head, a little shawl over his shoulders, equally happy to be alive and to make good diagnoses. These two are the keenest, the best of observers, and it is they who are later to attack most vigorously Charcot's pet theories regarding memory, the technique of demorphinization, and so on. For the present, they are attentive, respectful disciples, no more, no less. Gilles de la Tourette, Charcot's secretary; Dr. Brissaud, his chief assistant; Marie and Ballet, his other assistants, all made a point of attending his lecture, illustrated by some particular patient. It is the most original, the most instructive clinic in the world.

Charcot arrives in his coupé, drawn by two old nags. Loving animals as he does, he eyes them affectionately, and gives them a pat or two. He looks around at the gathering, gives two fingers to Brissaud, one to his interne—that is all. If there happens to be present some distinguished foreigner, the latter will murmur a compliment, to which Charcot replies with a stereotyped smile meaning, "You are really too kind, but I'm in a hurry." He proceeds to the cloak-room, which is next to a room used as a museum, laboratory and waiting-room. Brains and spinal cords, preserved in alcohol, all labelled and numbered, prove that we mean business and that people who want merely a good time should go elsewhere. The head of the clinic reports briefly the chief happenings of the past twenty-four hours. Charcot gives, in a low tone, some rapid, elliptic advice. Thence he goes to the large, badly lighted lecture hall, so often pictured in photographs and engravings. The spectators crowd in at the rear. A patient is brought in. Sometimes Charcot knows him already, often he does not. In either case, he questions him as though he were seeing him for the first time. It is in this examination that one recognizes his genius; he does not waste a moment on secondary symptoms, but drives straight to the point. He disregards indications which might confuse another doctor, but which he, Charcot, can afford to overlook. He does not lean pityingly over this fragment of humanity that has been brought to him for examination, but he speaks to the patient simply, clearly, without any affectation of sentiment. When, in the first few questions, he has discovered the scope of the intelligence of the person with whom he is dealing (for intelligence, like stupidity, is to be found in all ranks) he uses it, as he would a lever, to overcome difficulties.

He turns to his audience and at once becomes curt and technical. "Gentlemen, you already know—I have already told you—this is generally what happens——" He turns again to the patient: "Stretch out your leg, my friend, pronounce this word, do this, do that." The sick man obeys, proud of having his sensations so well understood, and flattered by the idea that he is serving the cause of science, so profoundly reverenced by the lower classes. When Charcot has to deal with an utter moron, he smiles pityingly and repeats his question until he is sure he has been completely understood. As he proceeds, he lets himself go, tells a story about a similar case, quotes a couple of lines of Racine, Molière, his beloved Shakespeare, or Dante, refers to paintings by Franz Hals or Velasquez. This concordance of medical and artistic affinities winding and criss-crossing picturesquely in his great, thoughtful brain, forms a marvellous spectacle.

When he has finished with one patient, another is brought in. The doctor is enjoying himself, he makes discoveries, he goes off at a tangent. If he does not understand something, he mutters, "I can't understand it." When the prognosis is bad, he indicates it in Latin, "*Prognostic pessimum, exitus letalis*, and, I might add, *properatus*." You feel that the disease interests Charcot more than the victim. He would rather make a discovery than effect a cure. Research into the great secrets of life, study of the decay of the nervous system, causes him to overlook the minor secrets of the healing art. When he refutes a fallacy he becomes angry, his eyes brighten, or he puffs noisily as though he were snorting out his contempt.

The lesson is over. In the ensuing confusion Charcot, at his regular pace, returns to the cloak-room, and thence to his carriage, without stopping to reply to the silly questions of the non-initiate. Confronted by a contradiction which he considers without merit, Charcot puts his little finger in his ear and shakes it vigorously as he turns on the astonished student with a curious grimace. Germans bore him; he has a marked preference for Englishmen and for Russians. As a matter of fact, he watches people far more than he listens to them. What interests him is not what you say, but what you leave unsaid, your character rather than your ideas.

About 1890, Professor Charcot had reached the height of his power. His word was law throughout the realm of medicine. The sum of his researches was an imposing one, for the attack on it, root and branch, had not yet begun. His methods in therapeutics were in use all over the world. No one, anywhere, published a book on the diseases of the nervous system without having sought Charcot's approval, his *imprimatur*. Diseases of the liver and the kidneys appeared to act in obedience to the laws which he laid down, and it was the same for diseases of the spine. Victims of ataxia and trembling paralysis were sent to him from North America, from the Caucasus, even from China. In those innumerable volumes published by Ribot and his pupils dealing with the will, the memory and personality, the name of Charcot was everywhere mentioned with respect. It was at this instant that the Grim Reaper, whose work he had so often examined, chose to announce his approach.

The scene took place at the end of an especially gay Christmas Eve party at Charcot's house in the boulevard Saint-Germain. All the evening Charcot had been at his ease, very charming, delighted to see all the young people, whose whims and fancies so amused him. Suddenly, as he was on his way to his room, he uttered a low moan; he put his hand to his chest, and his face suddenly paled. He dropped into an armchair. One of us hurried to fetch Doctor

Damaschino, who lived nearby. I dashed across the street to the house of Professor Potain. It was two o'clock in the morning. My teacher, just going to bed, opened the door. He was in his night shirt and held a candle in his hand. I told him, briefly, what had happened. Muttering his customary "The devil!" he slipped on a pair of trousers and a fur coat, turned up the collar over a white silk scarf, and followed me down the steps into the icy night. The moment after he entered Charcot's room he motioned us to leave them together. Fifteen minutes later he came out, with a prescription in his hand. "It's nothing, nothing at all—simply a gastric disturbance." I noted, however, how anxious he was to reassure us, and noted also a habit he had, when seriously upset, of putting his hands in his pockets and opening his eyes very wide. As I walked back with him, Potain said, in his low, hardly audible voice, "I had to reassure him; he thought it was angina pectoris." Then, after a minute or two of silence, "He was not wrong."

We had now reached Potain's door. I held the candlestick while the professor inserted the key in the lock. Deeply moved by this death sentence pronounced by an infallible judge in cardiac troubles, and trembling with horror and cold, I asked, "How long will it be, sir?"

With that infinite kindness of heart that belonged only to him, Potain put his hand on my shoulder as he answered, this time in a mere whisper: "Two years, two years and a half at the most. But *motus*, of course, my dear fellow." The next day Charcot had entirely recovered. He smiled at his guests, and joked about his alarms of the night before. I have wondered since whether Potain deceived him, or whether Charcot allowed himself to be deceived. One thing is certain, two years and a half later the sentence was confirmed.

CHAPTER IX

When Zola Fasted—The Madness of Maupassant.

LET us absent ourselves awhile from medicine and doctors, and return to happenings in the literary world during the confused period which centered about the Boulanger affair. Two episodes at this time seemed especially important to such of our friends are were interested in letters rather than in politics—namely, the attempt of Zola to eat and grow thin, and the first appearance of insanity in Guy de Maupassant. Only those in touch with writers and journalists between 1885 and 1892 can understand the importance which we attached to these two events. To-day I cannot think of them without smiling.

Indeed, there was something distinctly humorous about the changes in the physical appearance of the man who was, without doubt, the most disgusting writer of the nineteenth century. But people in general, and Zola in particular, took him very seriously. To be sure, he was in the habit of declaring solemnly, looking at the witty Aurélien Scholl as he did so, "I have no thenthe of humour. The delineatorth of the matheth have no thenthe of humour." As a matter of fact, those were the days when, under pretence of studying the masses and preparing a detailed outline of his Rougon-Macquart and Saccard & Co., Zola indiscriminately devoured scientific textbooks—or what he thought were such—dealing with heredity, crowd psychology, the individual as sample of the race, and all the other theories of fashionable evolutionism. He also fished for invitations to receptions given by wealthy manufacturers, where he could make first-hand notes on his hosts and their surroundings. You caught glimpses of him, replete and gloomy, in the refreshment room. He eyed the groups of guests and filled his memory with types, and what he saw would later reappear, distorted by his peculiar memory and transformed into orgies of blood and crime. Around him the spectators whispered respectfully, "That's Zola, the novelist; he is here to make notes."

Zola had a reputation, of which he was very proud, for laying on the colours thick, and not being afraid of any amount of muck. At regular intervals, in the "Figaro," he explained, with much verbal violence, his social and artistic theories, which resembled those of an overexcited high-school youth. Most of the articles have since been republished in book form. I assure you they are anything but dull. Zola's critical opinions were always based on a person's relation to his own ego. As inventor of an especially foolish theory, which he had baptized with the silly name of "Naturalism"—to the effect that man's digestive and reproductive organs control his actions more than does his mind—Zola classified arbitrarily, among the other exhibits of his dung heap, writers, as belonging or not belonging to the "Naturalists." He did this with immense self-satisfaction and complete absence of any genuine critical faculty. He would declare: "Now, here we find life as it is. This has power, the fullness of life itself. There is nothing petty here. It is luminous, direct. I claim it; it is mine. Brother-writer, you are my pupil; I include you in my great family of the Rougons."

He really did invent—or, at any rate, he popularized—a literary and artistic jargon which later became public property. Those constant references to "Life—large, untrammelled, free, emancipated, open," and all the rest of it, were due to him. How many "social sores" we opened in those days! To the Naturalist, everything that existed was a convention, or a prejudice, or a falsehood; these fallacies included women's fashions, good table manners, the avoidance of bad language in polite society. What does one find in the novels of Zola and his imitators? In the words of Baudelaire, "everbody gets drunk, everybody commits murder, everybody struggles with everybody else." Millionaires, mad with lust, spend their days in frenzied debauches, beating their wives, who are either angels of incomparable purity or poisoners and thieves. The servants, sunk in sodden slumber, lie about under the tables, while outside the windows are crowds of famished and uneducated working-people, who to-morrow will claim their revenge. They shake their fists as they trudge to their daily toil. In the midst of these victims of Hunger and Capital are to be found, here and there, Teachers (with a capital T). The latter are recognizable by their noble brows (Zola had a high forehead). They go about showering the charity of their fine speeches on the poor, declaring that this reign of misery must soon cease. Ascending the heights of Montmartre, they wax sentimental as they watch the sun "setting in all its radiant glory." This picture of civilization—with its "vast, contemporary portraits, my dear fellow"—was distinctly rudimentary. The "Giant of Médan" diluted and rediluted his opinions into a collection of thirty volumes of eight hundred pages apiece, which foreigners have considered as a guaranteed and absolutely authentic description of life and society in France.

But where the Scavenger of Médan surpassed himself was in his portraits of those to whom he refers to as "the nobility," the last remnants of great families. To appreciate them you must read, in the original, about the manners and customs of these feeble, sickly, morose beings who pass their days in idleness and are "sunk in the superstitions of another age." These unfortunates turn their back on the light, on progress; they have never read Darwin, Spencer or Claude Bernard. Zola—and Clemenceau too for that matter—was convinced that no titled person had ever read Darwin and Claude Bernard, or even Letourneau or Haeckel. All nobles are brought up by the Jesuits—and, as everyone knows, the latter never teach any history, science or sociology. They are still attached to those reactionary authors, those pillars of noneducation, Homer, Virgil and Racine.

I need hardly add that Zola despised and detested classical studies. "Bees—what are bees? The aristocrats of the insect world. They actually have queens, God help them. Don't mention bees when I'm about, but rather talk about the filthy flies, that go round and round in circles like good democrats (see "Pot-Bouille") and share in our vast movement to cleanse society." To Zola, the dirtier a thing was, the healthier it was. Tears stand in his eyes when he writes about manure, that source of all living things. He laves himself with delight in the sewers, and regards as hypocrites and rascals those who prefer other bathing places—he almost classes them with "the nobles." His whole work is the glorification of that august object, filth. When he wanted to be pure he wrote "Le Rêve," a dreadful book, whitened as though with quicklime, its sweetness a sort of compound of extracts from the foulest drains; you have the feeling that a church organ has been set up in the midst of manure-fields, with scavengers dressed up for first communicants. Before sitting down to produce this whitewashed nightmare, the unhappy author perused some volumes on mysticism. He imagined he could manufacture that, like everything else, and all he had to do was to paint his snout blue, like the sky.

Suddenly, for some reason which I do not know, Zola took it into his head to take the treatment for obesity—no liquids with his meals, hot tea, plenty of vegetables. The doctors were already beginning to prescribe this diet, whose changes upset the stomach. Zola lost weight rapidly. He felt himself becoming younger, more alert. Delighted, he went about accosting my friends. "How old are you?—Twenty.—Jutht think what it meanth to be twenty!—Ah, if I only were your age! Youth, youth, that'th what counth! Enjoy life, my boyth, enjoy life while we philosophithe about it." This was followed by tirades on love, the kind of thing one finds in the librettos of Charpentier's operas. "Live and love, my boyth, remember that only love matterth in thith world. It ith the great Liberator, the great Redeemer." My fellow-students at the medical school would say to me: "He's a decent sort of chap, that Zola of yours, but he's getting to be a bit of a bore. It wasn't so bad when he asked us questions about Claude Bernard, but now——"

It was at this period that the "Master of Médan" discovered, at one and the same time, the existence of "thoth thweet young girlth," as he called them, with an expression at once avid and solemn, and the moral beauty of truth, the radiance of abstract justice. He pictured the latter as one of the "sweet young girls" in a low-necked dress, and holding a sword in her hand. (Only, the sword, relic of militaristic tradition, ought to be replaced by a pen dripping with ink.)

The reduction in Zola's weight took place simultaneously with the break-up of what was known as the "Médan group." The novelist lost some of his flesh and most of his disciples, but he discovered Alfred Bruneau, the composer. Until then he, who had not the slightest ear for rhythm—as is shown by his prose—and who wished, in this as in everything else, to resemble Victor Hugo, had always declared that except Beethoven ("a very great man and a fine, shaggy figurehead") the people who made noises were good for nothing. When, at our house, Massenet, Pugno or someone else sat down at the piano, the novelist became glum and began to beat time with his right foot nervously, while he stuck his sausage-shaped little finger into his right ear and shook it vigorously. This gesture always indicated that he was nervous or impatient over something. It was different, however, when Bruneau offered to put on paper the different noises that occur in the epic of Naturalism, the Rougon-Macquart series. Zola was overcome when he found out the difference between an ascending and a descending scale. He had visions of a "New Music," just as he had previously prophesied the coming of a "New Drama" after meeting a horrible, dirty Jewish writer of melodramas, William Busnach, who tried to make plays out of some of Zola's stories. Every time some piece of appalling bad luck obliges me to listen to one of the passages in Bruneau's scores, which resemble the breaking of a lot of china in a tin wash tub—and are characteristic of the music of this orchestrator of Médan and its pomps—I am reminded of those poppies that "blossomed in chromatic scales" in the vast, enchanted garden where occurred "La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret." Having thus suddenly become aware of the importance of youth, love, sweet young girls, and music, Zola took them and mixed them up with science (it wouldn't have done to leave that out!). The result was "Le Docteur Pascal." This book, funny as a lyric hymn to life and the apotheosis of the chaste torments of the laboratory, is interesting because it contains the first traces of that apostolic call which later, at the time of the Dreyfus affair, manifested itself in favor of the Jews. In Zola's earlier books, especially those dealing with the Rougon-Macquart families, all the characters—whether they belonged to the working, the middle, or the upper classes—are alike consumed by nameless sins, alcohol, depravity, homicidal tendencies, and assorted sexual disorders; now there emerge, in the midst of this horde of apes and satyrs, the beneficent "giants," kind, magnanimous, and strong, prepared to redeem all classes of mankind. These giants, compounds of benevolence and brotherly love, are recognizable as transcripts of the author himself. In these novels of Zola's second period, the virtuous soul, haunted by dreams of the "golden harvests of the future," is invariably personified by some man who is a giant physically and very often blonde (Why?), and who spends his time pardoning everybody's sins, including some which are none of his business. The novelist took great care to endow his heroes with either the massive, wrinkled brow, or the nose "wide-nostrilled," sensitive, forever eager to catch the scent of the "brotherhood of man," which he could see in his own mirror. Strong enough to kill a bull with a touch of his little finger, his hero is absorbed only in his microscope, his blue-prints, his diagrams of economic theories. Fervent supporter of the Republic, Zola's hero has a dash of radicalism, socialism, and pacifism in his make-up. Every morning and every evening he shakes his fists at some stronghold of the powers of darkness such as Lourdes, the Sacré-Cœur, or if a more symbolic structure is not available, at the village schoolhouse. In the latter case he takes heart again when he remembers that nonsectarian education, the *école laïque*, will do away with all that! Here, again, the influence of Hugo was apparent. The only difference is that the Sacré-Cœur had replaced Notre Dame, and the supers had laid aside their pseudo-medieval costumes to don the overalls of the honest working-man. Compare Copeau in "L'Assomoir" with one of the blonde giants in "Travail," "Paris," or "Fécondité," and you will see how Zola, trying to establish his hold on the working classes—"those embittered masses that labour and sweat at obscure tasks"—replaces his former noisome, filthy puppets with another set, equally unreal, but now washed, brushed, deodorized, capable of becoming over night the undersecretaries of state of a radical cabinet.

Fat Zola pretended to be a chaste, austere moralist; thin Zola let himself go. In a short time, his dull and sodden depravity became notorious. I will not go into details, as I dislike all scandalous anecdotes and gossip. I need only remind my readers that the memory of Victor Hugo's two establishments continually haunted the mind of his imitator. What a victim of the "heredo" [1] Zola was, and what a mental restlessness one can discover in his vast, empty, and foul compilations!

* * *

The disease of poor Guy de Maupassant went from bad to worse, from the comic to the tragic. I saw him at rare intervals only, since he feared and avoided the accurate observation of Edmond de Goncourt, who came often to our house, but I frequently heard about him. My informants were sometimes his fellow-writers, sometimes my teachers at the medical school whom he kept consulting from morning till night. He interested me very much, for I thought at the time—and I still believe—his career would form the subject-matter of a model monograph, in which writers might come to see and fear the various traps that beset their path.

The first of these traps into which Maupassant fell was the social one. One day we heard that he had ordered three dozen pairs of pink underdrawers, two dozen pairs of patent leather shoes, and a collection of suits of all colours, and was gravely interviewing the fashionable shirtmakers and tailors. He found them all remarkably intelligent. Simultaneously, he began to run after persons with titles, or even those who were to be found at smart clubs, in the drawing-rooms of social leaders or the boudoirs of celebrated or intelligent courtesans. (In those days, one could still find the latter; they have disappeared since.) From everybody he asked advice regarding himself, his table manners (until then the latter had been rather boorish), how he should dress, walk, and ride. To his friends, who made fun of these changes and his new ambitions, he declared: "I've had enough of being an outsider. I intend to rise in the social scale. If I ever have a child, I intend to make a gentleman of him. I prefer a well-bred idler to a 'bounder' with genius." Though for these and similar foolish remarks people laughed at him, they also pitied him; the contrast between his failings and his crude, nervous talent made him somehow attractive.

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[1] See note, page 118.

Naturally, Maupassant attended the receptions of the Princess Mathilde, where he met a collection of snobs and Jews well qualified to turn his head. Social butterflies of both sexes amused themselves with this excitable, hot-headed Norman booby, mad on the subjects of canoeing and weight lifting. They would play all sorts of practical jokes on him. Sometimes he would be told to come in his red hunting coat to a dance where nobody else was in fancy dress, and his tormentors would enjoy the sight of his discomfiture when he appeared in flaming hue in the midst of the sombre, formal evening clothes. Or a fair damsel would make a ridiculous rendezvous with him, and he would discover people whom he knew laughing at him from behind every piece of furniture. Someone else would write him extravagant epistles which her maid would sign. He would receive invitations, and then be told not to come. He would be obliged to conform to nonexistent or silly social rules and formalities.

Maupassant accepted all this chaffing without good humour, but patiently. He believed the jokes were a series of steps bringing him ever nearer to his august betters. At times, he came to his senses, consigned everybody to the devil, went off and made love to servant girls or women of easy virtue, and told his society flames about it, in the hope of bringing them to respond to his attentions. But they only laughed at him the more, and later he would return, humbly repentant, to implore their forgiveness and beg permission to resume his perfumed yoke. Faint reflections of these alternate phases in his conduct may be seen in "Fort Comme la Mort," and especially in "Notre Cœur," but, naturally, Maupassant neglected to write in full what would have been the greatest novel of them all, the story of his own life.

In a very short time knowledge of his exploits became general. Their strangeness was attributed to sentimental misfortunes. I mention the more decent ones only, and even they are not especially atttractive. For example, there was his visit to a famous naturalist physician, the possessor of a library of erotica (in itself always an alarming symptom). The novelist asked the doctor to lend him an illustrated edition of the works of the Marquis de Sade, and added, "It is to complete the education of a young cook who is remarkably gifted in the way of perversion." "If she's a cook," replied the physician, "you had better give her a cook book." On another occasion—it was a fine summer's day—Maupassant got up a party to go out to the country. The meeting place was the Saint-Lazare railway station. As each guest arrived, Maupassant announced, confidentially: "I wish to let you know we are going to dine without a stitch of clothing. This is an indispensable part of the programme." He was most annoyed when his guests, who were persons of considerable social position, members of the Academy of Moral Science, and none of them especially fine physical specimens, politely asked to be excused. He kept repeating, "What hypocrites, what hypocrites!" One night, he was invited to dinner by a lady of the highest rank (at least, Maupassant thought she was), of whom he was enamoured. After the soup, the novelist proposed quite calmly that he strip to his shirt and run about under the table on all fours. He left before the dinner was over, very indignant because the frightened woman had not allowed him to do it. He kept complaining of the noise, the light, the sound of voices. He went to see fellow-writers whom he knew only slightly, and told them about a dispute which he had had with his landlord. It appears there was a bakery on the ground floor of Maupassant's house, and it drew cockroaches into the house. The writer declared emphatically: "Now, I cannot bear cockroaches. Isn't it dreadful? What would you do about it? Give me your advice." "Move." "It's impossible. I've got a long lease. It would ruin me." "Get rid of the cockroaches. There are ways of doing that." "Yes, but you have to use violent poisons, and I simply cannot bear the thought." "Make the baker leave." "He, too, has a long lease. My landlord likes him. If I went to law I should lose the case." This consultation lasted for an hour, until the man whom Maupassant was visiting began to wonder, "When is this bore ever going to leave me in peace?"

As always happens, the sick man's friends and acquaintances took a long time to notice that he was losing his mind. People said, "He's a poet, a dreamer, a creature of moods and fancies." Or else, "He's in love; he'll get over it." The doctors whom he pursued and annoyed with his questions prescribed health resorts, hydrotherapeutics, electrical treatments, bromide, chloral, change of scene, abstention from wine, tobacco, strong drink, work, and women. For a week, Guy would take a fancy to Professor So-and-so, then leave him for someone else, abandoning the new man for still a third. Only one physician understood his case. Several years previously, in 1886, Professor Landolt, the distinguished oculist, diagnosed his ailment as general paralysis. He kept the dreadful secret to himself, but he had not the slightest doubt of the worthlessness of the various treatments prescribed, or of the final outcome. The drawing-room "dolls" of both sexes never guessed that they were playing with fire when they took liberties with the too highly strung nervous system of poor Guy. I myself have always been sorry that before he finally succumbed to the implacable microbes, Maupassant did not wring the necks of some of his tormentors, both male and female.

I have always preferred that intensely poetic, bitter, pessimistic, burning volume, "Sur l'Eau," to anything else that Maupassant ever wrote. In it one catches a glimpse of a mind that is like a white wall topped with broken bottles and seen under a blazing sun. How the unfortunate man must have suffered who carried about with him, in the midst of Parisian society, such a conception of the universe, and who possessed the candour of a child and the concupiscence of a drunken mule-driver! Often, as I glance at his volumes of well-constructed short stories, so lacking, nevertheless, in distinction and depth—dry, brutal, and towards the end with a rather horrible quality about them—I weep over that lonely existence, around which hummed a flock of social drones, parasites of an empty epoch, and which attracted a hideous horde of fashionable fools, like evil spirits.

One Thursday evening—that being the day on which Alphonse Daudet was "at home"—I was taking some friends to the door when I saw Guy de Maupassant enter. The pupils of his eyes were dilated, and he wore an air of gloom. He inquired, "Is Goncourt here?" "No, sir, he has the grippe." "That's what I was told." He went into the study, where my father welcomed him warmly. "Ah, there you are, the man whom one never sees! You're looking fit. Sit down and have a glass of beer." Maupassant explained briefly that beer, a powerful toxin, upset his stomach. He looked at me, as much as to say, "Your son, who is studying medicine, knows that." Then he fell into a long silence, replying in monosyllables to the jokes of his friends, Léon Hennique among them. He remained there silent, pale, sunk in an armchair, of which he kept rubbing the arms with his short hands. His presence finally sent a chill through our Thursday evening gathering, generally so lively. When the clock struck midnight, he got up to go, like a ghost who is not allowed to be out after one o'clock, and ceremoniously made his departure. After he had gone, I could not help exclaiming, "He couldn't be gloomier if he'd killed 'la petite Roque' " (the heroine and title of one of his best tales) "with his own hands." Alphonse Daudet shook his little, white-enamelled pipe, a legacy from Flaubert, who had been poor Guy's teacher, and said: "It's a fact, his silence seemed full of sinister visions. Brrr! Go on, Pugno, give us a little music. I don't want to go to bed with that sort of feeling."

We never saw Maupassant again.

CHAPTER X

The Founding of "Le Théâtre Libre"—André Antoine—A Dinner Party with Renan and Francisque Sarcey—Georges Courteline—The Suburban Banquets—Monet.

HOW did it become known that an employee of the Gas Company was revolutionizing the art of the theatre by producing realistic plays, according to his own ideas, in a tiny hall in the Passage de l'Elysée-Montmarte? The plays included "Jacques Damour," adapted from one of Zola's short stories, Léon Hennique's "Esther Brandés," and "Sœur Philomène," adapted from the novel by Edmond de Goncourt. I don't know how the report started, but I do know that over night Antoine became famous. People were anxious for information about this determined, hard-working fellow, with his intelligent face. Antoine was exceedingly clever, but he insisted on speaking his lines in a low voice, with his back more or less to the audience. Consequently, all one heard of his parts were "God——," and other oaths that happened to be fashionable. Those were the days when literature was full of "slices of life," the theatre full of brutality, and the "Giant of Médan" shook with rage to think the Naturalist school did not have its own play-house. I should add that Hennique had already emancipated himself from Zola's leading strings, while Goncourt was much annoyed to have his work linked in any way with the productions of "that swine of a Zola," as he called him privately. Nevertheless, thanks to the craftiness of Zola, a confusion arose in the mind of the theatre-going public, who lumped the three authors together, a confusion which was both comical and regrettable. The author of "L'Assommoir," while adopting a frank, hail-fellow-well-met attitude, always knew how to protect himself while compromising others. By the time Alphonse Daudet and Edmond de Goncourt had seen through his tricks, it was too late. The guttersnipe already had firmly established himself before the public as an intellectual leader.

In every enterprise there are two elements that make for success or failure, the personality of the man who undertakes the enterprise, and the moment at which he undertakes it. The moment when Antoine started his "Théâtre Libre" was favorable. The popular authors were tired or tiresome, while the critics, with the exception of Jules Lemaître, had no definite standards, and gave the public only weird, venal or banal articles about what was being produced. It was another form of the situation we have to-day,[1] except that the cinema did not exist to threaten legitimate drama, and Semitic business methods had not yet turned the principal theatres of Paris into a kind of dramatic stock exchange. Sardou was the Edmond Rostand of the period. All he lacked was the latter's neurasthenia and his "darling little family." The older man's Arnaga[2] was called Marly-le-Roi, and instead of Edmond's bald head, with its fringe of long locks, he exhibited a little round hat called a "berêt." I have already mentioned what a bore he was, and what his all-devastating garrulousness could do to a dinner party.

I met Dumas the younger a half dozen times at the houses of mutual friends, where much incense was burned in his honour. He posed as a moralist and censor prepared to solve such difficult problems as the following: "I am in love with my husband; I do not know how to get rid of my lover; my best friend, who has a husband of her own, is in love both with my husband and my lover. Now what must I do?" Dumas would deliver his verdicts on such cases in an off-hand manner, while his admirers of both sexes would humble themselves in respectful admiration. In 1887 his famous plays, "Le Demi-Monde," "Monsieur Alphonse," "Diane de Lys," were already old-fashioned. People of my age would listen to them wearily, unable to detect any traces of that scintillating, corrosive wit which our elders told us they contained. I make en exception of "La Visite de Noces," which is a little masterpiece. On the other hand, "L'Étrangère," in which Coquelin in full evening dress trumpeted forth a famous tirade against microbes, seemed even then to have no relation to real life or common sense, while "La Femme de Claude," which has a certain amount of strength and spitefulness, seemed like a fantastic piece of unnecessary violence. Of Dumas the younger it may be said that all he saw in his life was reflected from the Code Napoleon and the medical books of his day. One lens of his spectacles was marked "paradox," the other "triteness." The credulousness and impulsiveness of the negro are very apparent in his work. I prefer his effervescent daddy, in spite of all his highly colored "copy." Though he uttered a thousand historical absurdities, he had a real love for the broad highways and the inns and taverns of old France.

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[1] This was written in 1914.

[2] Rostand's country place in the Pyrenees.

Antoine's fundamental idea was perfectly sound. He believed a manager could discover—in other circles than those of the popular, worn out dramatists—playwrights not yet famous, whose work was worth producing. Although endowed with prodigious activity and an intuitive genius, he was uneducated and believed in the future of the Naturalists. This initial error weighed upon his entire subsequent career. What he lacked was an adviser to keep him out of booby traps, someone both enlightened and enlightening with no manuscript in his pocket. Not having such a guide, he began by taking violence for strength, and stodginess for depth, and deemed all plays without cursing and swearing to be good for milksops only. Nevertheless, even his first productions had a flavour of their own. I remember in the minutest detail the rehearsals of "Sœur Philomène," to which I was invited on the ground that, as a medical student, I was competent to judge of the correctness of the hospital scenes. These rehearsals gave me my first appreciation of Antoine's ability to reproduce real life on the stage. By his manner of placing a bit of wood, a piece of canvas, or an odd "super," he can produce effects such as Irving with all his sumptuosities never achieved. This ragamuffin genius possesses an extraordinary faculty of imitation. He knows, for example, how to note and reproduce the way in which a certain kind of person stands, sits, or turns his head, so that the spectator recognizes and exclaims, "Yes, that's it!" Antoine has his weaknesses, of course, since no one is perfect, but after thirty years on the stage he has remained sincere and unaffected. That is why I am always glad, when I come across him in café or theatre. On his good-humored, quizzical face, with incorrigibly Parisian stamp, there is the vivacity and intelligence of an unconquerable mental sprightliness which will not leave him until he makes his last bow before the curtain of the grave.

Antoine hates to be bothered as much or more than most. He is perfect in the art of dodging bores. His method is simple; he vanishes, and his pursuer, though armed with a written contract or an oral promise (for Antoine is fond of saying, "Yes, yes, old chap"), searches for him in vain at theatre, home, café, or elsewhere. This marvellous gift, which has infuriated many an author, can be explained easily enough. Thanks to his remarkable powers of impersonation, Antoine simply slips into the skin of "the man who can never be found"; like the character in the old fairy tale he takes the shape of a passing cloud, of running water, of an unseizable eel.

"Sœur Philomène," in which he played the part of the student Barnier, was one of the first plays in which Antoine uttered, in accordance with the æsthetic creed of 1885, a resounding *"Nom de Dieu!"* I had been gravely questioned beforehand whether or not this oath was still in use in the hospitals, and had assured Antoine that it was. As a matter of fact, every other sentence of our conversation contained either this expression or one more famous still and even more naturalistic. After lengthy consultations with the authors as to whether he should pronounce the phrase while standing or while reclining on a table, Antoine finally chose the latter attitude. We greatly appreciated the scandalized exclamations of the audience.

Except for the illiterate Henri Bauer, whose consistently misdirected praise was considered an insult, and Catulle Mendès, anxious to place some of the musty manuscripts in prose and verse, which he kept hidden away in his desk among the ether bottles, the dramatic critics were, at the outset, rather hostile to the Théâtre Libre. Sarcey repeated obstinately, "I don't understand," although the plays produced at the beginning were simple enough. He belonged to the days of the Second Empire, and hence could only appreciate farces or plays with a thrill in them, such as "Les Surprises du Divorce," the insane offerings of Sardou or Gandillot, or what he called "the well-built play," like those of Dumas the younger or Augier.

I once heard Sarcey explain in detail his simple system of æsthetics. It was during a dinner at Lockroy's house, 140, avenue Victor Hugo, where he met Renan for the first time. The other guests included the Chinese ambassador, whose name I forget; the dwarflike and silent Francis Arago, son of the ambassador at Berne, who had a blond beard and was very stupid; his father, Emmanuel Arago, a good democrat of '48, still jovial at seventy, with an enormous violet nose; the hunchback and shifty politician Deluns-Montaud; Gustave Larroumez, head of the École des Beaux Arts, and a few others. We expected great things in the way of conversation from the first encounter between Renan and Sarcey. The former nodded approval of the food, his eyes half-closed like those of an elephant, as he stuffed himself with enormous mouthfuls. He began by assuring Sarcey of his admiration for "your celebrated —extremely favorably celebrated—personality," and, indeed, "for the stage as a whole." A short time before, the author of "La Vie de Jésus" had had a one-act play produced at the Théâtre Français. It was written as an offering to Victor Hugo, and included salutes with cannon and the crowning of the poet's bust. He recalled the occasion with pleasure. Sarcey, his eyes gleaming through a pair of huge spectacles, complimented Renan on his work. Larroumet interrupted, and tried to stimulate each of these "grrrrrreat men." His efforts were so successful that by the time the roast was served the discussion was in full swing. It was an entertaining exhibition, though one felt that it had been arranged beforehand, more or less, and it evoked excited and enthusiastic whinnyings from Francis Arago. Somehow or other, the conversation happened to touch on Diderot's "Paradox sur la Comédie." Father Sarcey, chaste in his expressions, at least, called Diderot a pornographic writer, a statement to which Renan could only reply by a terrified movement of his skinny hands, his mouth being too full for him to answer in words, while Deluns-Montaud delivered a pro-encyclopedic tirade. Passages at arms, clicks of the foils, bursts of laughter! A moment's silence, in which "Fandango" Arago—as my friends had nicknamed him—could be heard muttering, "What a really notable occasion this is!" while he caressed his blond beard as though it were the appendage of some river-god. He added that the only thing lacking was the absence of a friend of his, a Monsieur Gavarry, an intelligent and charming diplomat. "Ah, really, Gavarry, Monsieur Gavarry," murmured Renan dripping condescension and sauce. Sarcey turned toward the visitor from the Orient, and, moving his two sausage-shaped index fingers up and down—as actors do when playing the part of a comic Chinese—wanted to know, "Won't you give us a little tune from your country?" The ambassador politely excused himself for his ignorance regarding this alleged Chinese custom, but his slanting glance betrayed the pleasure he would have felt in having the insolent-looking, fat, white ball that Sarcey called his head, lopped off immediately.

After dinner, Renan was installed in a comfortable armchair in the drawing room downstairs. There he proceeded to turn into a statue of Free Thought. Members of the Chamber of Deputies, friends of Lockroy's (among them Antonin Proust, Freycinet and others), came up and paid their humble respects to the after-dinner digestion of the state elephant of the Kingdom of Unbelief. Renan shook his sly old head from right to left as he buried under compliments the most insignificant officeholder whose name Lockroy whispered in his ear. At every remark made by Freycinet, that little ivory figurine, the author of "La Vie de Jésus" would raise his hands as though overcome by a flash of genius, then let them fall slowly back on the arms of his chair. Renan enjoyed making fun of these gatherings, which he despised, but where he found waiting for him incense, and good things to eat and drink.

After Renan had departed, Lockroy told us that in Syria, where he acted as Renan's secretary, the latter, then a young man, and Madame Renan slept in a bedstead to which bells were attached. Whenever she heard these ring, Mademoiselle Henriette Renan, who lay awake jealously next door, would call out to her brother, "Ernest, be careful not to catch cold. Put on your flannel undershirt." This anecdote delighted Sarcey, Larroumet, and Francis Arago, while the Chinese ambassador asked with unctuous urbanity to have the point of the joke explained to him. "Don't try to understand," replied Sarcey, "these gentlemen are talking Parisian."

I took the shining star of French dramatic critics out to the refreshment room and persuaded him to swallow half a dozen glasses of something called "cerises au kirsch." By the time he had had three he assured me that he adored Alphonse Daudet in spite of " 'L'Arlésienne' not being so well constructed as it might have been." After the fifth glass, tears stood in his eyes as he bitterly regretted his lost youth and the "wild women." I believe he actually ended by kissing me on both cheeks and promising, as a supreme reward for my zeal in providing good liquor for my elders, to send me "a good box at the Comédie Française." "You don't mean to say that you actually intend to get chummy with old man Sarcey?" demanded Georges Hugo, indignantly, as he led me away.

Although, in general, Francis Magnard, editor of the "Figaro," supported new movements, he was decidedly hostile to the crude violence of the Théâtre Libre. What a rage he was in the day he called for his coat and left his box in the midst of a performance of Tolstoi's "The Power of Darkness," in which it is supposed that the bones of a new-born child are devoured off-stage! But neither his attacks nor those of Sarcey could prevent the Théâtre Libre from succeeding. Later Magnard changed his attitude and admitted the remarkable gifts of André Antoine. It was the latter who first called attention to the greatest of our contemporary playwrights, François de Curel, a natural-born dramatist whose characters are constantly in action, living, talking, moving towards climaxes that seem inevitable. Another writer whom the Théâtre Libre discovered was Eugène Brieux, but this discovery does not deserve so much praise. Brieux is one of those half-educated "advanced thinkers" dear to such liberal-minded conservatives as Denys Cochin and d'Haussonville. These pretentious nincompoops have landed him in the Académie Française, and I don't wonder. One day I stood behind d'Haussonville at a reception. I was wondering at his skull, too small for the brain of a song-sparrow. He was speaking of some writer or other, and described him as "rather daring; he goes a good deal further than we do—still, that very quality makes him the more attractive." Probably this is how he considers Brieux, who managed to mess up and christen by an idiotic title—so silly that I cannot repeat it here—the bitterest, most dramatic pathological subject in the world, totally unsuitable for stage production.

On the other hand, the plays which François de Curel has already given us, especially "La Nouvelle Idole," contain the elements of masterpieces. The only gift which he lacks is a sense of perspective.

Besides "Les Fossiles," by Curel, and Hennique's "La Mort du Duc d'Enghien," the Théâtre Libre also produced "Boubouroche," by Georges Courteline. The apparent simplicity, masking a concealed intricacy of detail, the bitter humour and humanity of this picture of a fond and foolish cuckold, mark a similarity to Molière's comedies. Here, as in his "Train de 8 Heures 47," Courteline has proved himself an inspired writer. The man himself is a character out of a fairy tale. He is short in stature, and has a papier-maché complexion with eyes that are constantly in motion. His overcoats always have sleeves that are too long, and he always carries a bulky brief case. Many a time have I seen Courteline pop out of the earth as though emerging from a trap door in a pantomime, and sit down at a café table. Before one can speak to him, he has plunged into a vehement oration, seeking to prove something that is quite unimportant to anyone who happens to be there, men accompanied by their wives, fellow-writers, passersby or even ordinary "soaks." He dotes on persuading people to his opinion, and is always delighted to drive home an argument. With the kindest heart in the world, Courteline is as lively as quicksilver, keen as a knife, as merry as a glass of Anjou wine, as melancholy as a country constable, as familiar with legal matters as a provincial notary's clerk, as much of a night prowler as a Montmartre cat, a friend, a humorist, a delight. Not to know Courteline is to miss one of the good things of life; not to appreciate him is a sign of liver trouble; not to admire his disciplined imagination, argues a want of literary taste. For his humour is only the outer coating of a rich, harmonious embroidery of thought; he offers you wisdom, now in a glass of voco,[1] now in curiously carven little boxes.

My father liked Courteline, and knew his book, "Le Train de 8 Heures 47," by heart. He asked me, "How can we get Courteline to come to the house? He is bored in a drawing-room; perhaps we could arrange a room to look like a café, with sawdust on the floor and a lot of those round, metal bowls into which they throw the dishcloths."

"Be careful," interrupted Coppée, "I knew a young woman once who fixed up her house like that to keep her husband at home. Pretty soon he escaped from the conjugal nest; he said the beer wasn't fresh enough."

So, not having extra-fresh beer at our house, my father sent me out to try to catch Courteline. He is as difficult to find as Antoine, but not for the same reasons. In those days he had several residences, besides that of his parents, where, being a dutiful son, he appeared at least once a day. Moreover, he rarely answers letters or telegrams. I fancy the telegrams he gets are used as stuffing for the famous fat brief case. Even when, after long search, one locates him, he remains absorbed in his own meditations or in the story he is telling, and it is difficult to attract his attention. Lastly, he never keeps an appointment book, and his memory in this respect is very poor. Hence, the following dialogue, on one occasion: "Courteline, there's something I want to tell you." "Certainly; what is it, my boy?" "My father begs, implores, and beseeches you to dine at his house next Thursday. Can you come?" "Just a minute. Let me see. To-day is Wednesday, to-morrow, unless I am mistaken, will be Thursday. I've got my article to do for the 'Journal.' Oh, well, I can put that off. Waiter, bring me a sheet of paper and a blotter. I'll write a line to Xau." "Don't bother,

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[1] A sort of sweet liquorice-water sold to children in the parks of Paris.

I'm seeing him in half an hour, and I'll give him the message. We can count on having you, can't we? The address is 31, rue de Bellechasse, eight o'clock, informal dress." "Certainly, my dear fellow, I'll be there on Friday." "Not Friday, confound it, *Thursday.* How can I get that to stick in your head?" "Easy enough. Jules (here Courteline called to the waiter), you'll remind me to-morrow that I'm having dinner with Alphonse Daudet. You understand; don't make a mistake." "You can depend on me, Monsieur Courteline." The following evening, at the hour agreed on, Alphonse Daudet who had not forgotten the appointment, began to worry, saying to me, "You're sure that Courteline will come?" "Well, father, I did my best. He promised to be on time, but you know what he's like." Every time the bell rang, we exclaimed, "Here he comes." Always in vain. It was Armand Charpentier, the unhappy author of "Le Roman d'un Singe," who looks like a boiled rat, or Georges Toudouze, or someone equally unimportant. It is remarkable what insignificant individuals turn up when one is waiting for someone who really matters; a man who is expecting a letter from his lady-love answers the bell only to behold a person distributing circulars! Finally, at half-past eight, we went in to dinner, my father as melancholy as a Tristan deprived of his Isolde. We tried to evoke the absent guest. We quoted bits from his "Boubouroche" and his "Lidoire," but this only increased our disappointment. The evening passed sadly. The next day, when I met Courteline, he muttered: "Confound it, my dear fellow, I was to dine with your father to-night, Friday, wasn't it? But just fancy, a previous engagement——"

The truth of the matter is that the author of "Messieurs les Ronds de Cuir" is so fond of his liberty that he cannot bear the thought of spending a sedentary evening. He has often told me that what he enjoys is to take a train, preferably on a Saturday evening, go off to some little town or other and there, thanks to the timely offer of a drink or a game of billiards, share in the local interest, in the lives of perfect strangers. This is how, while he listens to the remarks of his new acquaintances or the man at the next table, he finds material for his wonderful prose, which sticks to everyday life like the shirt to the back of the runner. Montaigne has said of that way of writing: "It is the same on paper as it is on the lips," and I am sure he had Courteline in mind.

Nevertheless, had Montaigne himself asked Courteline to dinner, the modern who cares as little about swanky country houses as he does about drawing rooms, would have given him the slip.

This high-strung satirist is a keenly sensitive, fully developed human being, defending his friends with all his mental energy as well as with frantic gestures. It would be suicide to say a word against Mendès in his presence. Not that he ignores any of the poet's unspeakable and innumerable faults, but where a friend is concerned he is systematically blind. In this case his uneasy glance seems to say: "If I admit any of these charges, I'll have to capitulate altogether; I like Mendès, so I must deny everything."

He has collected for his own amusement all the maddest, most ludicrous, or most burlesque remarks and scenes he has come across, and he enjoys telling you about them. You feel that to him they are full of curious psychological values. He has a scientific mind, and I have often admired the directness with which he puts his finger on the essential weakness or vice in a character, ignoring minor peculiarities. Courteline is, in spite of all his modesty, one of the most interesting figures of our day. I am confident in regard to the esteem in which the future will hold his work, he has struck so highly personal a note with so delicately personal a touch.

But to return to Antoine and his productions. The Lockroys, Edmond de Goncourt, and my parents had subscribed together, first at the Gaité-Montparnasse and then at the theatre on the boulevard de Strasbourg, for one of the big stage boxes at all the first performances of the Théâtre Libre. So it happened that one evening Prince Louis Napoleon, who had been invited by Edmond de Goncourt, found himself sitting beside Georges Hugo. The audience forgot the play while they watched with curiosity the meeting of the nephew of Napoleon III and the grandson of the writer of "Les Châtiments." The conversation, in which I shared, was very friendly, but I was told that that stupid fool of a Frédéric Masson, on hearing of the incident, lifted his monkey-like arms to Heaven and uttered a torrent of imprecations. "Ah, your Highness, Your Highness, if your poor father, my illustrious master, had seen a thing like that!"

Whenever a play failed or was violently hissed, Antoine's partisans became rabid, cheering frantically and calling the Philistines names. They even offered to fight such low creatures as were unable to appreciate any new form of drama. Antoine, on the other hand, remained quite calm, and placidly divested himself of his costume—the beard of a lecherous peasant, the side whiskers of a shyster lawyer, the cap of a mutinous private, or anything else he happened to be wearing. He was even much amused at times, for he is one of those who do not mind the mob in the least. He picked up his "supers" anywhere and everywhere, including the neighbouring low dance halls. Consequently, the wings would be filled with a collection of cut-throat gangsters. The uneasiness of his more bourgeois visitors used to amuse Antoine, who would say, "They're all perfectly good chaps, only I wouldn't advise you to ask them to hold your pocketbook for you."

The "Suburban Banquets" which we rechristened "the dinners of Jolly Good Fellows," did not last as long as the Théâtre Libre, but they belonged to the same course of artistic and literary activity. They took their original name partly from the fact that some of the dinners took place on the outskirts of the city, partly because Raffaelli, painter of the suburbs, was one of the founders. This artist, formerly much criticized, was exceedingly kind-hearted. Always good-natured, always ready to help a friend, the best of companions, he might be compared to a clear, limpid landscape, every feature of which is attractive. There was never any misunderstanding with him, never a discussion, never a quarrel, no matter how insignificant. Moreover, he never minded if you made fun of his "old men painting their backyard fence," or his views of fortifications and chimney-pots. He was recognizable by the grey frock coat which he wore. This made him look like Napoleon—but he was much more approachable. Cheret and Monet attended the dinners too. The former, whose hair was turning white, was tall, slender, and taciturn, of the English type. His posters were much admired, and it was good form to declare, in the phrase of the day, that "they gave a touch of color to the dull walls of Paris." Monet was bearded, extremely cultured, rather silent, expansive only when he spoke of flowers and nature. Geffroy, Mirbeau, Jourdain and I kept saying all the time when speaking of Monet or of Rodin: "He is jolly good. His cathedrals and hayricks are jolly good. His "Porte d'Enfer" is jolly good. He is a jolly good colourist. What a jolly good eye for form he has." This is, I believe, where the expression, "the dinners of the Jolly Good Fellows" came from. I had better admit right now that my opinion has not changed since then. Monet is one of the few painters who has managed to capture and fix on his canvas the rays of the sun, the slanting lines of the rain, the play of colours in the mists. He is one of those men who adds to the beauty of the world. From behind the railings—for one does not dare disturb the privacy of such a painter—I have admired the loveliness of his gardens at Giverny, so much like the beauty on his canvases. As for Rodin, the jokes which people make about his intentional mutilation of his statues, and his packer who smashes everything he handles do not prevent him from being one of those rare mortals who has penetrated the secret of form, whose glowing genius can give beauty to the limp or the rigid body, can kindle desire and grief.

The most remarkable thing about Rodin, creator as he is of virile vigor or feminine softness, is that he, a master of the sensuous, has plenty of brains and is capable of hard, close reasoning. The glow of his inspiration fires the upper regions of his mind. He feels what he wants to create, and then studies the means by which to produce it. He is a master of fire and water, a Triton fathered by Vulcan. He has indeed been favored by the gods in this, that few great artists have been so stupidly praised and blamed. What a shame it is that some of his best statues—the famous Balzac, for instance, that mighty cast of the novelist's dream—could not, like certain fabulous Egyptian statues, remember the words uttered in front of them during the day and repeat them at night-fall! We should so have had a collection of banal asininities even more complete than what we find in Flaubert's "Boucard et Peruchet." At the Suburban Banquets Rodin used to stroke his beard and murmur brief but weighty comments; sometimes he would burst out into ringing laughter at our jokes.

CHAPTER XI

Clemenceau and His Newspaper—General Boulanger—The Real Inauguration of the Eiffel Tower—Wagneromania among the Medical Students—My Military Service.

FROM the time of the disaster of Lang-Son,[1] when he brought about the fall of the cabinet headed by Jules Ferry, until the gloomy days of the Panama scandals years later, Clemenceau was the politician most prominent in the public eye. He was especially noted for his skill in upsetting the various cabinets that in those days called themselves "opportunist," just as now (1914) they are labelled "radical." Clemenceau did his "stunt" with a little smile under the black mustache that stuck out below his high yellow cheek-bones. Seen at a distance, he looked like a skull; seen close at hand, like a Mongol. He spoke in a curt, nervous, railing voice, and had a certain amount of wit—but one felt that he was always trying to "show off." The fact that he had been a medical student in his youth made him popular with the undergraduates at the medical school, while his air of defiance, of pugnacity, pleased the students in general. We always "cut" our classes to hear him speak when a big debate happened to be on. Writers said of Clemenceau, "He's the only one of the politicians who isn't a windbag." Nevertheless, many of our friends were surprised that he did not challenge Drumont after the famous attack in "La Fin du Monde." The two adversaries were not destined to meet until later, in connection with the Dreyfus case. There can be no doubt about the fact that Clemenceau is brave—but he never believed in taking unnecessary risks.

I have always been fond of the atmosphere of newspaper offices and the smell of printer's ink. Every now and then, of an evening, I would drop in at the offices of "La Justice," the paper of which Clemenceau was the editor. These offices were situated either in the rue Montmartre or the rue du Faubourg Montmartre—I have forgotten which—in one of those big, lopsided buildings, with dark, murky staircases, where public opinion is manufactured. The Chief came in between eleven and twelve, very swagger in full evening dress, and wearing that expression half ironical and half surprised, which his intimates know so well. His staff, his contributors and his personal friends crowded about him, while Geffroy nudged me, with the remark, "The boss is good-natured to-night; there'll be some fun." The dapper editor of "La Justice" was already a cynical observer of human nature, a keen satirist, amusing in minor matters and illogical in his handling of important questions, willing to listen to criticism but never consciously acting on it. Clemenceau was then, and still is, a blusterer, easily influenced, sometimes cruel and too disdainful of others' opinions, but imaginative and willing to assume his full share of responsibility. He is entirely devoid of scruples where his ambitions are at stake. In those days, I kept my opinions to myself, for Geffroy has always had the loyalty of a true Breton towards Clemenceau. Everywhere I heard Clemenceau's praises being sung. Even my father, rarely indulgent toward professional politicians, was prepared to admit, "At any rate, he's the one man of the lot with whom one can have some intelligent conversation." My classmates envied my luck in being able to associate with the man who had overthrown Ferry. It was a universal infatuation; Drumont's criticism of him was considered the freak of a pamphleteer, eager to play ball, even pistol ball, with a skilful adversary.

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[1] A defeat of the French by the Chinese in March, 1885. (Translator's note.)

The movement in favor of General Boulanger, although it affected the masses, produced only a slight repercussion in the literary, artistic and scientific circles of Paris. I mention this especially, because the indifference of the intellectuals to this first and ephemeral appearance of the nationalist spirit after 1870 has generally been overlooked. It was one of the causes of the final failure of the movement.

The General enjoyed the support of a group of politicians, a few sincere patriots, two renegade Jews, Arthur Meyer and Alfred Nacquet, the rabble and the social butterflies. What he lacked was one or two efficient, non-political lieutenants, and a following among the intelligent and cultured youth, the professors and the undergraduates of the big educational institutions, and prominent men of letters. Although Drumont declared that he would vote for Boulanger, he did so without much enthusiasm, and Edmond de Goncourt's approval was expressed from a distance and therefore lacked weight.

I remember Rosny the elder, Jean Charcot and myself getting into a fight, on the night of the General's election as deputy, with a street crowd which wanted us to yell "Hurrah for Boulanger!" At the medical school everybody was anti-Boulangist, without any definite reason. We considered his supporters, with the exception of Rochefort, a gang of rapacious and incompetent office-seekers, worse than the people whom they were trying to oust. Charcot set the example by hanging the general's picture in the privies at the school and forbidding Nacquet to mention his chief's name. Alphonse Daudet, in spite of being an ardent patriot, declared that he could not get excited over the popular idol. He was chary of the unreasonable enthusiasm, which was destined, he realized, to be of short duration. It appeared to him a cheapening of a sacred sentiment. When, at meals, the conversation drifted toward the movement and its leader, he always attempted to change the subject, and declared he disliked the "corner saloon" type of politics. Nevertheless, Daudet said one day to Lockroy, who was one of Boulanger's subordinates at the War Office: "Give me a definition of this miracle man? How do you account for his popularity?"

I can still see Lockroy, twisting his eyeglasses, on the end of a long, black braid, around his little finger, before replying: "It's simple enough. Boulanger is the regular good-looking young cavalry officer of a musical comedy." And Coppée said virtually the same thing: "France fell in love with Boulanger as a pretty girl loses her head to a second lieutenant of hussars." He added, with a sigh, "The second lieutenant didn't know how to do his part, though—worse luck!"

Naturally, I was a spectator at most of the great demonstrations for the people's idol—especially one night in January (1887) when we watched the brilliantly lighted window of Durand's music store, in the Place de la Madeleine, where he had established his headquarters, while, on the first floor, the General was letting slip his supreme opportunity. He might so easily have marched on the Elysée or, rather, let himself be carried thither in triumph! Of course, if he *had* gotten in, the result would have been merely another ghastly mess. That same night a crowd of us returned to the Latin Quarter and shouted at the top of our lungs, "Down with Boulanger!" At the corner of the rue Soufflot, the police arrested about thirty of us. We were taken to the police station opposite the Pantheon, kept there for a while, and finally released with profuse apologies when the authorities became convinced of the General's invincible inertia. We told the worried policemen, "That's what happens when a man is too anxious to go a-visiting his little friend." [1] But we did not realize then the full truth of what we said.

The only time I ever met Boulanger was one evening at the Ministry of Commerce, when Lockroy held that portfolio and Boulanger was minister of war. He dropped in quite informally, and was much amused by the astonished air of the man who opened the door, when he gave his name. "He must have thought, seeing me alone and at this time of night, that I was preparing to carry out a *coup d'état,*" said he. Boulanger had an agreeable manner, a pleasant voice, an open countenance, and looked about him with a pair of blue eyes that seemed anxious to please. In spite of this, I failed to grasp the secret of the hold which he had on the mob.

Poor General Boulanger! He allowed himself to be duped by a gang of scoundrels who, in the end, joined forces with the other scoundrels opposed to him. He felt himself the center of mighty forces which he did not know how to control and which, in the end, caused his downfall. Powerless to act, like a man in a dream, he saw about him the frantic faces of men urging him to do and dare, he heard the cheers of the mob, the entreaties of women, some of whom worshipped the ground he walked on. Glory beckoned him forward; like the wind blowing through the pines of some lonely headland, it whispered an inspiring message. All this must have passed through his mind when he pressed the trigger in the lonely cemetery of Ixelles, beside the tomb of the one being whom he loved, for whom he had thrown away everything. For he was a greater lover than chief, more of a victim than a hero, yet, when all is said and done, his name will remain attached, as a funeral wreath hangs to the railings around a grave, to the first effort on the part of France to rid herself of her vile parliamentary government. Lacking in the movement which centered about him was a singleness of purpose, and the will to attain the goal. The Boulangist agitation was merely a caricature of an effort to achieve freedom but, at the present time, no one will deny that the man who headed it was brave, unselfish and idealistic. May Providence, whose designs are inscrutable, pardon his self-inflicted death.

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[1] Boulanger was more interested in his love-affair with Marguerite Crouzet, a divorcée, than in his political career. He killed himself on her grave. (Translator's note.)

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Since Lockroy happened to be Minister of Commerce during the Exposition of 1889, like his friend Millerand during that of 1900, he considered the gigantic candlestick known as the Eiffel Tower his personal creation. He was greatly annoyed when François Coppée made a protest against the monstrosity which in later years was to cause so much spilling of ink and attract so many sightseers to Paris.

We know nowadays what disastrous undertakings such world's fairs are, still more by their later repercussions than in their immediate consequences. Like gigantic pumps, they suck in the country population and make it dissatisfied with normal conditions and the routine of farm and village life. These vast enterprises, whose real purpose is to afford the government an occasion to confer as many bits of ribbon as possible, increase the cost of living. In a state organized as a republic—in other words, one whose real masters are aliens—these fairs favour foreign goods at the expense of native products. They represent the triumph of the middleman, the intermediary—in other words, the Jew and the undesirable foreigner. Furthermore, they never produce anything permanently useful or valuable. All this explains why they deserve to be called machines for manufacturing bankrupts and prostitutes.

In 1889, public opinion had not yet come around to this point of view, although since then it has become generally accepted. A factor in the public effervescence at that time was the fact that the Exposition coincided with the centennial of 1789. That date —no matter what those self-deluded people who call themselves liberals may say to the contrary—will always remain the most tragic in all our history. I blush when I recall the condition of blind stupidity, the depth of historical and political ignorance, not only of my fellow-students and myself, but of all with whom we came in contact. The amount of silly truisms concerning the centennial, uttered solemnly at either public banquets or private dinners by persons usually intelligent, is unbelievable. The same persons who were ready to deplore the butcheries of 1793—although they frequently excused them as having been necessary in the interest of the nation—admired unreservedly the not less sanguinary and perhaps still more cold-blooded atrocities of 1789. Of course, we had the works of Taine as an antidote, but the author's spirit of systematic pessimism, and his pseudo-scientific attitude, spoiled volumes which would otherwise have been interesting and stimulating. He objects to everything. In the same breath he damns the Old Régime and the Revolution, traditional customs and ready-made panaceas, decentralization and Napoleonic Jacobinism, the constructors and the destroyers. The general impression he leaves is therefore that of a menagerie gone mad. Taine called himself a determinist, but he would be the last person to discover the real causes of the evils which he denounced so vehemently. Like Charcot, he was a passive observer of all sorts of convulsions, and felt that he had done his full duty when he had recorded the number of victims. He is one of those teachers who, having themselves lost hope in a cause, sow panic and despair. I admire him less than I did; I was fond of him once, but that feeling has passed. I shall take pains to guard my sons from his teachings, his falsely mathematical conclusions. Even in his "Littérature Anglaise" I recognize his errors in judgment, especially in regard to Shakespeare, Swift, and Byron, whom he is generally considered to have portrayed so brilliantly. Taine was a Procustes in a frock-coat.

He was like a man who seeks to fit life into a certain rigid frame. When life breaks that frame, he holds that it is life that is at fault.

To return to the Exposition—I have the following confession to make to my readers: It was Georges Hugo, accompanied by your humble servant, who inaugurated the Eiffel Tower, twenty-four hours before the official ceremony. We were coming away from a reception, at about half-past eleven one evening. A stormy wind whistled over Paris. We had to pass the virgin edifice (to use the words of M. Prudhomme), and found it enclosed by a fence. The watchmen dozed at the doors.

"How about going up there?" proposed Georges, whose disposition was adventurous, in spite of his reputation as a dilettante. He added, "Seen in a storm, the view must be magnificent." Then, stepping up to a watchman, who stared stupidly, he announced, "Inspection service; come to see if everything is ready."

Everything proved to be ready enough. By striking matches, which the wind blew out as fast as we lit them, we managed to find, in one of the pillars, a stairway leading upward around the elevator shaft. The interminable climb began. By the time we reached the first platform my legs felt as though they were perforating my stomach, and I was quite ready to turn back. Georges indignantly pointed out the unworthiness of such behaviour. How ashamed we should be, all the rest of our lives, if we quit now. And what a superb panorama we should behold when we attained the summit! Forward to the second platform. By the time we got there I was as winded as the hero in "Sapho" when he carries the heroine upstairs. We joked about this in the midst of the howling and shrieking of the storm, which rose with us. Georges hummed the air from "Le Roi s'Amuse":

"Au mont de la Coulombe
Le passage est étroit,
Montèrent tous ensemble,
En soufflant à leurs doigts."[1]

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[1] "On Coulombe Mountain the trail is narrow; they all climbed it together, blowing on their fingers."

Wisely we had agreed not to pause on the second platform, in order to avoid fatigue. But at the third stage we had the still harder task of climbing a dark, spiral stairway that ended in a sort of metal hood, like the lid of a saucepan. Georges lifted this lid. We had the feeling of being in the midst of clouds which blew hot or cold air alternately on us. A flag was snapping furiously over our heads. I wanted to hold it still, but it jumped about like some strange beast. Finally, it slipped down the staff and dropped at our feet. Needless to say, our efforts to rehoist it were unsuccessful. There was nothing left but to climb down again. The panorama of Paris by night, which we had thought would be so wonderful, simply didn't exist. All you could see was a black hole through which raged the wind. Though the ascent had taken us an hour and a half, as we had been obliged to feel our way, we made the descent at fair speed. At each turn of the stairway we paused and called to each other at the top of our lungs, knowing the gale would deaden the sound. We had no difficulty in getting through the gates again, the watchmen being fast asleep by this time. How good the glass of beer tasted which we drank in a nocturnal café in the avenue Lowdendal! The next morning the newspapers reported that the wind had torn down the flag on the Eiffel Tower, and no one would believe us when we gave a circumstantial account of our exploit. Lockroy laughed, but shook his head. "You dreamt the whole thing; they would never have let you in." This only proved that he had faith in the department of which he was the head. My father, more indulgent, was prepared to admit that we might possibly have reached the first platform; others to whom we told the story shrugged their shoulders. I am convinced that the reader will fancy we are exaggerating or inventing our adventure, that we have talked ourselves into a belief in a wholly imaginary feat. Only Georges Hugo and I know what actually happened on the night when we secretly inaugurated the Eiffel Tower.[1]

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The *salle de garde* in a hospital is the room that serves as headquarters for the internes and the temporary internes. The students have their meals served here, and make it their lounging-room and library. On account of the atmosphere, which is one of mingled seriousness and youthful enthusiasm, and because of the important visitors who drop in occasionally, and the character of the students themselves—who, while still immature, are called on to make decisions involving life and death and shoulder responsibilities beyond their years—these *salles de garde* are very lively centers of intellectual activity. The public knows only the exuberant tomfoolery of these gatherings, as it appears at the *bal de l'Internat*. But the *salles de garde* are more important than that. I knew them well between 1887 and 1892, when I was a temporary interne, and more especially a friend of many full-fledged assistant house-physicians. It was there that I witnessed the decline of the evolutionary materialism which had formed so prominent a part of the philosophy of the preceding generation, and the birth of what I call Wagneromania, and all that went with it. There can be no doubt that the daily sight of illness, suffering and death affects young and active imaginations. Their possessors seek refuge in philosophical doctrines, in physical passion, in music—or, worst of all, in chemical poisons, morphine, etc. Hence, those frequent, violent crises of the heart or brain in the bare rooms and chilly corridors of the great hospitals, those strange struggles of sense or mind between the ages of twenty-five and thirty. Cultured or not, anyone may be susceptible to them. The interne at a hospital is not like other men of his age. In close contact with the grimmest, most unpleasant realities of life, he is generally devoted to his patients, and is capable of any degree of self-sacrifice. Indeed, examples of the latter are constantly occurring. On the other hand, the interne is exposed to every sort of physical temptation and moral contagion.

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[1] This was written in 1914; Georges Hugo died in 1925. (Translator's note.)

The famous surgeon Alberran was once, as a young man, on duty at the children's hospital, and caught the croup from one of his patients. It was a Sunday, and he was alone in the immense building, with only two Sisters of Charity and an orderly. He had his instrument case brought to him; the orderly held up the mirror, and Alberran performed an operation on himself, bandaged himself up, and continued his duties. The next morning he was at his post, smiling at his professor and holding the incident to be merely part of the day's work. These men, so constantly exposed to the deadliest contagion, cannot afford to pose. How often have I seen So-and-so, a noisy chap who was always kicking up rows and going on sprees, leave his meal, his cup of coffee, or his game of cards, to see whether Number 17 or 25 in the men's ward had had his medicine, or whether the dressings on Number 8 in the women's ward did not need changing! You may be engaged in throwing bits of cheese at a man across the room—and suddenly your companion in this noble sport will stop to ask for the formula for making such and such a bandage, or for a tip on how to treat an accidental pneumothorax. Where risks are taken constantly, and as a matter of course, by everyone, mutual aid becomes not only customary but obligatory. "What are you doing this afternoon, old chap?" "Going to a concert. Van Dyke's singing to-day, and it'll be splendid." "You're wrong; you're not going to any concert. You're going to stay right here and puncture a pleurisy with me." "Oh, all right! Just let me finish my smoke first."

There is no better school of altruism and hard work in the world than the *salle de garde*. "Always on deck" has to be the motto of the interne. To appreciate properly the value of a quick decision, of a solid pair of artery clamps, and a firm wrist, you should spend a night at one of the great hospitals in the center of Paris, Beaujon, or the Hôtel-Dieu, for instance. You should watch the stretchers bringing in the accident cases. Besides the ordinary cases, there are sure to be a couple of would-be suicides, some cases of sudden insanity, a few premature births natural or otherwise, and a number of fakes. The interne is supposed to know everything, to be never at a loss. If things go wrong, it's his fault—but necessity makes him ingenious.

* * *

How did Wagneromania happen to invade the *salles de garde* about 1887? Probably it was partly a reaction against the then existing æsthetic theories and the Naturalist school, partly a result of the constant stream of French students attending Kolliker's course on embryology or Erb's clinic for diseases of the nerves, in

Germany, and the corresponding flood of German students coming to France to study bacteriology. Then, too, we must not forget the German metaphysics which poisoned my generation and paved the way, naturally, for German music. Kant leads to Wagner. The third wave of Teutonic "kultur" which broke over us after 1870 was typified by Friedrich Nietzsche, the second undoubtedly by his one-time friend, Richard Wagner.

The name of Wagner served as a rallying cry for the reactionary forces which attacked evolutionary materialism when the latter had become unduly preponderant about 1885. We need only examine a bibliography of that period—the dullest of all dull periods, by the way—to see how all scientific research was dominated by a certain set of theories. They pretended to be those of Lamarck and Darwin, but in reality they were nothing of the sort. All intellectual production was based on a most arbitrary and absurd conception of existence. It was disguised as a series of deductions from the laws of biology, and was applied to physiological and social problems. The bookshelves were littered with poisonous volumes—all of them dull, and imbued with a vile, abject, anticlerical spirit and a philosophy such as might have been conceived by an atheistic trussmaker. The recognized leaders in contemporary thought were, in Germany, that sinister being, Ernst Haeckel; in England, the kindergarten-class of Spencer and Huxley; in Italy, the insane alienist, César Lombroso; among the twelve tribes, the hideous Max Nordau, the plagiarist of Morel of Rouen; and in France, such men as Nacquet, Letourneau, Féré and the rest of them. Their writings formed a kind of minor "Encyclopedia," resembling that which laid waste the human mind toward the end of the eighteenth century and from which the genius of such men as Cuvier, Laënnec, Claude Bernard and Pasteur seemed to have delivered us. But it is always thus in a period of depression after military defeats or civic catastrophes—the lower strata of the mind, the lees of the intelligence, rise to the surface.

In Wagner's plays, intelligent French youth imagined they found an antidote for the weariness of soul which weighed upon them. What they admired especially was the dramatist's cloudy, incestuous mysticism; his love of creative effort; his racial consciousness; the sudden, overpowering emotions that animate his characters. They were grateful to the author of "Tristan" for having linked together passion and poison, for having glimpsed, beyond the individual case, the vast, eternal laws that govern the races of mankind. Wagner's dwarfs and giants, his gold that was first stolen and then recovered, his birds of prophecy, his personifications of Fire, Iron, Destiny, his bursts of sensual lyricism—all these appeared to French medical students as windows opening on a newer, wider, fresher universe. Those who ventured to raise objections, in the name of the traditional laws of sanity and proportion, seemed to us a lot of bores and old fogies. We worshipped the Lord of Wahnfried less on account of his prodigious gifts of harmonization than for what I may call his parametaphysics. I smile—and blush—when I recall that what we admired most in Wagner was—his librettos! We used to study even his most insignificant character with the closest attention, as though we believed that Wotan could solve for us the problems of life, and Hans Sachs could teach us the canons of free, untrammelled, spontaneous art. On Sundays, we all gathered in the top gallery of the Cirque des Champs Elysées, at the Concert Lamoureux. There, where Father Lamoureux, as we called him, distributed his sonorous and celestial manna, the moment the neophyte had found a seat he would fall into a trance, bury his head in his hands, and reply to his companions by mere monosyllabic exclamations. We considered the people downstairs, who had paid high prices for their seats, an ignorant crowd of philistines, and we felt it our duty to comment audibly on their lack of proper, devout attention. What murmurs of indignation there were when some stout dame, with a bust the size of a soup-tureen, disturbed a whole row while she hunted for her seat! And how the eyes of Charles Lamoureux sparkled with wrath, as with raised baton, he waited for her to subside! Sometimes, the conductor would turn toward his orchestra and scold one of the musicians, like an angry frog haranguing a locust. After, let us say, Siegfried's funeral march, or the last duet in "Tristan," those who had not been to Bayreuth would turn with questioning glances to those who had made the pilgrimage. Had this performance been a good one? Was that the way it should be played? Yes—not just right, perhaps, but still, good enough. Then would come the applause.

My father was madly enthusiastic about Wagner's music, in spite of his love for everything that was clear-cut and definite. On the other hand, he held that the scenarios were dull, too long drawn out, too "ethereal." Edmond de Goncourt put Wagner's words and music in the same basket, and stuffed Beethoven on top for good measure. If you spoke to him about these two, he would make a gesture with his long, pale hand that seemed to say, "Oh, how little, how very little, all that sort of thing appeals to me!" Drumont, who later came to admire the "Walküre" and "Tristan," preferred in those days *la veritable Manola* as sung by Pagans, which was not quite fair. People said, "Old man Daudet understands music, but only as an artist; Father Goncourt and Father Drumont are deaf." I was laughed at for my efforts to make these writers, whose intelligence I admired, understand the marvellous qualities of the "guileless fool," or the enigmatic attraction of Siegmund for Sieglinde.

As for Zola, the verdict was a harsh one: "He's a man living in a *cœcum;* he can only appreciate what he has under his nose." Students of anatomy will appreciate the phrase; other readers may guess at its meaning. Thanks to my cousin, Louis Montégut, who was an intimate friend of the pianist Édouard Risler—the latter later specialized in Beethoven, but was always a musical wizard—I sometimes had the treat of listening for an entire evening to the deciphering of one of Wagner's scores. I invited my fellow-students. Stretched out on couches, we would summon before us the complicated procession of figures and ideas evoked by the music. They floated about, under the surface of the sound, like dreams beneath the surface of our waking life.

Thus eagerly did we slake the thirst for the Infinite which assails the human being between the ages of twenty and thirty, and which we had been prevented from quenching in those two great wells, the Catholic religion and the philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

By this means we escaped from our narrow prison of the study of the laws of anatomy, from matter-of-fact physiology, from barren analysis unillumined by any faith, or even by any dogma. Thus the theories of the master of Bayreuth benefited by the contrast with Burdeau's critical method, with the republican doctrine of evolution, and with the circumambient stupidity of the time. No matter how strong we were in analysis and introspection, we were too much overcome by the delights induced by Wagner's magic to examine it critically.

As a matter of fact, German metaphysics, German music, German embryology, German neurology formed one single mass of influence which in successive waves assailed the minds of my generation of Frenchmen. After Hegel, Kant, Hartmann and Schopenhauer came Beethoven, Bach and Wagner. Following Wagner and his universe, the latter peopled by sensual abstractions and erotic visions, came Kolliber, Weissmann with his "Essays on Heredity," Erb, Nothnagel and the rest. If it had not been for Charcot and Potain, French methods of scientific research in medicine would have been discarded even by French students. The fortunate reaction òf Réné Quinton and a few others against these Teutonic influences came just in time. It saved more than one branch of our national culture from succumbing to their *Bildungskraft*. I have come to realize since then that what we lacked, in order better to resist the invasion, was some firm political guidance. Without pilot, compass or tiller, we were tossed violently on the waves of sudden, successive infatuations. The most dangerous of the latter was this enthusiasm of ours for Richard Wagner; he implied and included all the others. Led by him, all the children of Arminius, the conqueror of the Roman legions, danced fantastic measures in our brains. And since youth demands sacrificial victims, no matter to whom it sets up its altars, we were prepared to offer up our compatriots as a holocaust. At the height of this Wagneromania, only two French operas interested us in the slightest. These were Reyer's "Sigurd" and Lalo's "Le Roi d'Ys." Even this interest was only passing as far as "Sigurd" was concerned. It is perhaps unnecessary to add that we knew nothing about Rameau, were not familiar with Glück, and would say, in speaking of Bizet and "Carmen," "Yes, of course; it's too bad he died so young."

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In the days when the "Action Française" was driving the Jewish playwright and military deserter, Henri Bernstein, from the Comédie Française, a little old Jewess declared one night at a dinner-party, in the presence of some twenty persons: "But Léon Daudet deserted, too. I'm absolutely sure he did." To which one of my friends replied: "No, madame, you are mistaken. It would be on record if he had done so." As a matter of fact, my papers show that I belonged to the class of 1886 and served, without incurring a single punishment, a whole year's voluntary enlistment in the 46th regiment of Infantry. I was quartered in the barracks in the rue de Babylon, Paris, and my duties were those of assistant medical officer. Later, I spent the regular three periods of training with the reserve and territorial forces in the 26th Battalion of Chasseurs Alpins, at Grenoble and at the Fort de Vulmis in the nearby Tarentaise district. In Paris I had as my companions, among others, Jean Charcot, who later became famous as explorer of the arctic and antarctic regions, and Georges d'Esparbès, now curator of the palace and museum of Fontainebleau. I would not go so far as to say that we found our military service altogether pleasureable, or that we looked forward eagerly to our daily visit to the infirmary, but we did the best we could, even though we dodged painstakingly any extra work that came our way. To do so, we used the time-honored method of keeping out of sight. As we were obliged to spend part of our time at the hospital, in giving lessons to the orderlies, and in taking care of the sick soldiers, we generally managed to find a loophole of escape, when anything additional came along. "Daudet, you will accompany me on parade this afternoon." "Lieutenant, I should be delighted to do so, but unfortunately I am obliged to give a lecture at the Port Royal barracks." "Can't you put it off?" "Quite impossible, sir, Colonel's orders." "Well, then, will you be at the riding lesson at the École Militaire?" "We must visit the Val-de-Grace hospital, sir." At the end of a month of this sort of thing, our commanding officers gave up asking for explanations. Occasionally, Colonel Alessandri, an excellent officer, who was very easy going, in spite of the severity of his appearance, asked us how we were getting on, if we were getting the hang of things? "Certainly, sir; very well indeed, sir." "There's nothing you want to ask me about, is there?" "Nothing at all, sir." "Very well, then, that will do." Pointing us out to the officers who were with him, he would say, with pride: "Now, take these young men——" He never finished the sentence.

Once I had a very narrow escape. It was during the summer, and, thanks to all sorts of diplomatic negotiations with my sergeant-major, I had been able to sleep out of barracks for several nights. My father had asked his old friend Alessandri down to dinner at Champrosay that Sunday. As we were coming back in the train, the Colonel, with the best of intentions, said something which chilled my blood: "I will give you leave to sleep in town to-night, and I'll tell the sentinel on duty when I go in." In a flash I saw what would happen: The sergeant on guard duty would reply, "But, Colonel, Doctor Daudet is not sleeping in barracks at all just now." Then would follow an investigation and all sorts of unpleasantness. Consequently, I answered firmly that I was much obliged, but I preferred to return to barracks, as no one expected me at home. "Very well, then; I'll go with you." So I had to go to the barracks anyway, cross the courtyard, and climb up to our squad room, where everybody was already asleep, and where there was no bed for me, mine being occupied. I did not hesitate. Going over to d'Esparbès, I shook him awake. "Eh, what's the matter?" "I've just come back from the country with the Colonel. He wants to see you downstairs right away." D'Esparbès is such a good sort himself that he never imagines anyone will be mean enough to play a trick on him. I can still hear him mutter in astonishment: "Oh, that's it, is it? What can the Colonel want to see me about, at this time of night? Perhaps they're going to transfer me to another regiment again." (I should mention here that it was due to the special protection of General Boulanger, whom he had met one night at the Chat Noir, that Georges was indebted for having been brought back to Paris from a dismal, far-away garrison town, and that he lived in constant dread of a new exile.) I replied evasively as d'Esparbès grumblingly got up, put on his trousers and coat and disappeared in the darkness. Then I slipped into his bed. Downstairs in the guardroom they, naturally, sent him about his business, inquiring, ironically, whether he hadn't been drinking. Five minutes later he reappeared—and found me snoring. There followed a scene worthy of Courteline's "Lidoire," as Georges pleaded with me to give him back his bed, and I adjured him gravely to let me sleep. Finally, I sent him to the infirmary, to spend the rest of the night on a chair in the "wounded" section. Thus it happened that Colonel Alessandri's dinner at Champrosay cost Georges d'Esparbès a night's sleep.

In the early days of our military career we used to follow painstakingly the complicated rules of the hospitals for making bandages and dressings. Before long, however, the force of routine and the scepticism of our chief surgeon—a scepticism which was really wisdom and experience—reduced us to treatment with calomel, sulphate of soda and mustard foot baths, and the prompt lancing of refractory boils or blisters. "Are you going to hurt me, doctor?" "Not a bit, my boy; just sit down and shut your eyes." A firm, deep stroke of the scalpel, and it was all over. The soldier squirmed with pain while, in order to make him feel better, we made the usual inane remarks, such as, "Well, much worse things than that will happen to you if there's a war; brace up and be a man." The blisters of others are always such extremely unimportant affairs.

The only time we ever had any real trouble was over an aching tooth. A sergeant developed an awful toothache one Sunday afternoon at the Nouvelle Calédonie barracks in the Faubourg Poissonnière. I don't remember who was on duty with me at the time, but at any rate the sergeant was in such pain that I felt sorry for him. In the absence of the chief surgeon, we decided to extract the bicuspid, which was surrounded by a red, swollen gum. Having rubbed the gum with a piece of cotton dipped in ether, I grasped a forceps, got hold of the tooth, and pulled. In spite of all my efforts, nothing happened. I passed my instrument to my companion. "See what you can do; it's too much for me." At length a cracking sound indicated that the socket was giving way. The tooth itself held fast to the jaw and refused to move. It looked like a mortar tilted over some gory parapet. We were dripping with perspiration. I shall not attempt to describe the sergeant's entire lack of satisfaction with the proceedings, or his moaning cries of "Oh, doctor; oh, doctor!" Every time we started to pull again, his screams filled the courtyard. Finally, it became necessary to call a cab, put our poor patient aboard and set out in search of some dentist's office which would be open, in spite of its being Sunday. We discovered one in the rue de Rivoli. The practitioner, with a pitying glance at our clumsy handiwork, in a jiffy extracted the object with which we had so long wrestled. The sergeant, his hand on his cheek, thanked him, thanked us, asked to have the tooth carefully wrapped up, and went off perfectly satisfied. Best of all, he did not for a moment question our skill. "I knew as soon as we got to the dentist's what the trouble was; in barracks you haven't got armchairs like that." What had most deeply impressed the simple soul was the fittings of the dentist's office. He kept on repeating admiringly, "Say, they must have cost a whole lot of money; more than a thousand francs, I'll bet."

There was in those days no trace of anti-militarism among the soldiers in Paris. Yet the leaven already existed; three volumes prove it. One of them is "Le Cavalier Miserey," by Abel Hermant. It is the most poisonous and dangerous of the three; in it the bitter hatred of the school-teacher, so important in his little circle and so unimportant elsewhere, for the firmly established authority of the army officer, is clearly visible. It is the only sincere, forceful volume that Hermant has ever written, because it is the only one that is not an imitation, a sham, a frozen nightmare. Another of the three is "Sous-Offs," by Lucien Descaves, a strong, bitter, highly pessimistic book, written according to the prevailing Naturalist formula. It conveys the feeling of self-sacrifice to an ideal, but distorted, soured, dissatisfied as a result of the necessarily disagreeable fatigue duty of barrack life in peace times. Finally, there is "Biribi," by Georges Darien, dealing with the military convict colonies in Africa. In this volume the reader is conscious of being in the presence of the spirit of actual revolt, a storm wind blowing beneath a blazing sky. These books had a deep effect on many men, who, bilious and sullen, and opposed to all forms of authority, resented dumbly, without realizing the real causes of their revolt, the idea of obligatory military service. I have watched the growth of these seeds of rebellion, as though I were witnessing an experiment in a laboratory. It happens so often that the first sparks of social conflagration are kindled in literary groves and thickets. In a country as intelligent and highly civilized as ours, the printed word is of extreme importance.

We may hold it as an axiom, that ills caused by books can only be cured by books. And as a corollary, that a poisonous volume can only be combated by another volume that strikes at the roots of the evil doctrine, or else by a long series of logically thought out and clearly developed arguments, not by a hasty, popular pamphlet of the type intended to "uplift the masses." We must never forget that the French Revolution was the work of the Encyclopedists. Their deadly lies could have been destroyed by nothing but an appeal to the higher forms of intelligence. In all the diseases of the main nervous system, the physician must treat the brain and the spinal cord, not the nerves themselves.

The conservatives still insist on ignoring these facts, which were unknown to the majority of counter-revolutionists until the publication of the works of Charles Maurras. The conservatives delude themselves by thinking that anti-militarism can be stamped out by patriotic speeches, by brightly colored posters, or by calling the pacifists names. They believe their opponents are equally stupid. Twenty-five years ago (this was written in 1914), no literary man suspected that the three anti-militarist novels mentoined and Zola's story, "La Débâcle," foreshadowed a violent movement of scepticism in regard to a man's military obligation to his country. These cries of anger, discontent and revolt appeared to be simply individual aberrations, and no cause for worry. Men like Sarcey, who protested against them in the newspapers, did so very stupidly. They called on judges and policemen to protect society, instead of attacking the enemy with sound arguments.

They abused their adversaries instead of refuting them. Thus, about 1887, there began to gather, little by little, among groups of literary and university people, the terrible storm which broke eight years later with the Dreyfus Case.

CHAPTER XII

France Between Two Wars—The Activities of the Anarchists—Maurice Barrès—Marcel Schwob Again—Oscar Wilde.

DURING the dreary period between the Boulangist movement and the collapse of the Ligue de la Patrie Française—or, in other words, between 1890 and 1904—France enjoyed an era of apparent peace and plenty. Underneath there is a smoulder of anarchistic activities. The intellectual forces of the nation seem asleep. Most of my compatriots have lost their sense of the meaning of political events, and are satisfied to be governed by a gang of politicians, rapacious, mediocre and incapable in the extreme. The naturalistic novel, the naturalistic theatre, and the vaguely idealistic reaction against them, known as the Symbolist movement and limited to minor magazines and little coteries, fill the literary market-place with the noise of their futile controversies. Zola reigns on his dung heap, whence he lays down the law. He is about to publish "La Débâcle," the fruit of his natural cowardice, of his hatred of everything that has to do with the army. My father and Edmond de Goncourt, who have seen through him at last, avoid him discreetly, but, on account of their former friendship, do not attack him openly. Lisping and wriggling his forked nose, he is constantly on the lookout for some incident which he can exploit, some opportunity to play the rôle of a Hugo of the Privy, and utter, from the top of his pile of filth, weighty sayings like those that echoed from Guernsey. Popularity is the coveted truffle for which he digs. He seeks it everywhere, grunting as he goes.

The stage is still flooded with remnants from the "bargain sale" of Sardou's productions, with farces such as those which Sarcey loved, with the offscourings of Ohnet—not to mention the dreadful adaptations which Busnach, the Jew, made of the works of the

Pornograph of Médan. In addition to this, we have, on the one hand, the trite comedies of Pailleron and the talky-talky, improbable pieces of Dumas the younger; on the other, the "strong" dramas of the Théâtre Libre, where André Antoine wastes his remarkable talent in producing vehement nonsense. We are living in the midst of a fictitious originality, where "cuss words" have taken the place of "slices of life" and "human documents." Our sentimental and æsthetic vocabulary has absorbed thieves' patter, street slang. The laws on which the French language is founded are ignored, while, at the same time, the image of France's greatness becomes ever dimmer in the minds of men. People are proud to get down and propel themselves about on all fours, to wear as a badge the sins of society, to fill perfume bottles with rotten smells.

With the exception of what Lemaître and Bourget are writing, literary criticism has disappeared. Brunetière is absorbed in establishing his reputation for originality according to the rules of the Academy—in other words, he assembles the largest possible number of contradictory paradoxes; while scatterbrained Faguet sprays forth streams of praise and criticism in all directions; he is like a watering-cart filled with ink and driven by a drunken peasant. The fame of Taine has reached its height; it casts a glaring, crude light on certain details and artificially constructed theories, and leaves lost in shadows the essentials of the subjects with which he deals. His attacks on the Revolution delight the reactionaries, but all he really does is popularize the opinions of such writers as Mallet du Pan, Barruel and Mortimer-Ternaux, adding the scientific and moral sauce which the taste of the time requires. He neglects entirely the principal arguments for his case. The work of the great Fustel de Coulanges, who wrote "La Cité Antique," is entirely unknown to the general public, and no one, except specialists, pays any attention to the works of Luchaire on the Middle Ages. That Levantine adventurer, Alfred Edwards, in founding "Le Matin," and Ferdinand Xau, in starting "Le Journal," create what are known as the great modern news-agencies, whose chief characteristic is the exploitation of the minor incidents of the day at the expense of really important happenings. This "jazz" is the most useful of mufflers. Its sensational revelations allow scoundrels, to the number of a hundred or more, in the pay of Germany, to carry on undisturbed their task of preparing for the next war. That war will be one of rapine, extortion and destruction. Future years will reveal the fact that the so-called "liberty of the press" serves only to make the newspapers the humble servants of "big business." The latter establishes its hold in a hundred different ways, but espeically through the advertising columns. The great banking firms combine to form a pool called the "press bureau," which makes the newspapers dependent on the international financial interests. Ever since the Treaty of Frankfort in 1871, these interests have been controlled from Frankfort, Berlin, and Vienna; it is easy to draw one's own conclusions.

Whichever way you look, you note, in all departments of French life, an abundance of brains and much genuine talent, but always a misapplication of the brains and the talent. It is as though the framework of French society had suffered a shock and had side-slipped; no one is quite at his proper place in the scheme of things, no one occupies the post where he may be most useful. This maladjustment is due to political causes, and the fact is recognized by a young man of genius, Charles Maurras. He is unknown, solitary, in touch with a few uninfluential poets only, and there seems to be no possibility of his being able to deliver his message. Yet twenty years later, on the eve of a general conflagration, he will proclaim his gospel in spite of almost unbelievable difficulties, and it will be received with tremendous enthusiasm.

The spirit of anarchism, latent in government circles since the proclamation of the Third Republic on September 4, 1871—and even before—has in the past twenty years taken possession of the minds of many, and has found a place in the habits of society. All young men are imbued with it more or less, especially if they belong to university circles. It is the logical consequence of the liberalism of the preceding generation, of democratic individualism, and of overcentralization. From the minds of the men of letters, these doctrines are now spreading to the masses. The terrorists, Ravachol, Émile Henry, Vaillant, Caserio, the apostles of the gospel of bomb and knife, might be characters from "Les Misérables" who had attended chemistry courses at night school and had studied at the cutler's shop.

Ravachol was a sort of tramp, a theorist and anti-clerical, who began by robbing and murdering a recluse. Like Victor Hugo, Eugène Sue, Michelet and Zola, he was convinced that the Society of Jesus was the one great obstacle in the path of progress. In order to liberate humanity, one must begin by cutting the clergy into little bits. He had also a scheme for a uniform diet, to be the same for all citizens; everyone was to have his share of macaroni and butter, but wine, alcohol and meat were to be prohibited. He was in favour of dynamite and robbery, referring to the latter, of course, as the "redistribution of social belongings." In short, he was a semi-literate gone mad from the reading of evil books and association with evil companions.

Émile Henry belonged to a higher social level. He was a man of some little education and had the pale complexion of a neurotic girl. Henry threw a bomb on the platform of the Saint-Lazare railway station, killing and wounding several persons.

Vaillant, the least objectionable of the three, was an honest workman who had taken seriously the promises of popular government. When he found out his mistake, he threw a bomb into the midst of a session of the Chamber of Deputies. All it did was to wound a couple of politicians, and make the reputation of Charles Dupuy, who was presiding at the time and who uttered his famous phrase, "Gentlemen, the session will continue."—Alas, it still continues!

If these three insurgents had been satisfied to make rabid speeches at public gatherings instead of resorting to "direct action," if they had followed the beaten track which leads from the peaked cap and sneakers of the workman to the newspaper offices (generally by way of the police court), they might have enjoyed successful careers. Each time they changed their political opinions, as they went up the social ladder, they would also have changed their tailors and haberdashers, and have found new groups of conservatives ready to admire their conversion and offer them moral and material support. Instead, all three were guillotined between 1892 and 1894, just as mere nobles had been done to death a hundred years previously. The men whose political theorizing had produced these anarchists, just as surely as a hen produces eggs or an oak-tree acorns, murmured, "Of course, they were interesting examples of individualism, but organized society is obliged to act in self-defence." "Not a bit of it," replied certain young logicians, among whom were Maurice Barrès, Marcel Schwob, and I. "The only mistake of these terrorists was to make a too practical application of those 'laws of the Right of Man' which serve you gentlemen as a means of livelihood." People paid no attention to our remarks, any more than they did to Drumont. He had just founded his paper, "La Libre Parole," and was publishing a series of magnificent articles, filled with historical parallels and written with a sombre splendour of style which places them among his best work.

These discussions became more animated—and at the same time more inane—in the weeks following the assassination of President Carnot by Caserio, at Lyons, in 1894. I had met Carnot two years earlier, when I accompanied that rascal of a Lockroy to the Élysée in connection with some official ceremony. Carnot impressed me as a simple, kind-hearted, shy man, not at all the sort of person whom one would expect to die like Henri Quatre. The day after the quite unexpected murder, some fifteen persons happened to be dining with us at Champrosay. Some of those present were indignant, others attempted to look at the event from a philosophic standpoint. Two or three of the younger men remained silent. My father asked their opinion. They declared that exceptional rank incurred exceptional risks; besides, Carnot's own grandfather had done far worse things at Lyons during the great Revolution. This provoked a general discussion—a long and stormy one, in fact. I can still remember its principal developments. They revealed admirably the state of mental confusion we were all in at that time. For these men of letters of various ages, there was no common meeting ground whatever, no unity of political outlook. Everything was empty theorizing, or purely individual opinion. Coppée quoted the Gospels, Mariéton recited Shakespeare, Schwob based his views on Kropotkin, another man quoted Stirner, somebody else Reclus. What a hodge-podge! Several of the speakers wondered whether the assassin thought, as he looked at the illumination of Lyons, just before he killed Carnot: "In a few moments I shall have extinguished all that!"

During a pause, Goncourt declared: "What a quantity of bad sculpture this will produce! If Caserio had been an artist, the thought of that would have restrained him." This remark eased the tension considerably!

The same evening we discussed, with an equal divergence of opinion, the panic into which the deeds of the dynamiters had thrown Parisian society. This scare lasted about eighteen months in all, several weeks of calm being followed by new alarms. While the knights of fuse and picric acid were on trial, everyone sought to avoid residence in the apartment houses in which the judges or any of the jurymen lived. The janitors, shaking in their shoes, hardly dared open the front door, for fear of exploding a bomb. All through the wealthy residential section around the Parc Monceau, people left for their summer vacations four months earlier than usual. They preferred being bored to death in the country to being blown up in town. The middle class, terrified by anonymous letters from tradesmen whose bills they hadn't paid, besought the public authorities to adopt the strictest repressive measures, to set up permanent scaffolds, and to massacre ruthlessly all disturbers of law and order. In the meanwhile, the government passed all sorts of exceptional laws for public safety; not one of which was ever put in force. The owners of conservative newspapers begged their editors not to use too strong language in their articles about the anarchists, for fear of some of the friends of the latter. The editorials must be vehement, but vague—something not so easy to write, at that! On the other hand, certain rascals made a good thing out of this general funk. Equipped with cap and beggar's bowl, they might be seen calling on well-known persons, sending in a card marked, "So-and-so, Socialist." When shown into the study of Mr. Easy Mark, their caller explained with much detail that, although he himself was an anarchist in theory only, yet he was in touch with certain militants, and it would require a certain number of *louis* to appease the latter's lust for bourgeois blood. One of these fakers called on Francisque Sarcey at his apartment in the rue de Douai. The old gentleman spent two hours, by the clock, explaining, with many a rolling r, the superiority of altruism over egoism and the advantages of regular employment. One Academician who received such a visit had an attack of heart failure; another had the colic for a week.

It was fashionable to pose as an anarchist. Maurice Barrès had just published his "L'Ennemi des Lois," in the "Écho de Paris," and Marcel Schwob his "Livre de Monelle." But I must present these writers to you as they appeared in those days.

Barrès had just achieved a decided success in literary circles with his book, "Le Jardin de Bérénice." He was marked by extreme literary refinement, was very clever, and thirsting for fame. He spoke in a deep, resonant voice, marked by a strong Lorraine accent. He was tall and thin. When sitting, he crossed his legs and pushed back, from time to time, the heavy, black lock that fell over his broad forehead. He had a proud look in his eyes, which were sometimes gentle, but always perspicacious and ironic, and in them was a blue-black glint such as one sees on the skin of a ripe plum. Even as far back as that time, Barrès despised fools and scoundrels who happened to be in office. In spite of his metaphysics, which revolved about the ego—a reminiscence of his youthful studies with Burdeau—he already championed the homely virtues of the soil and the inherent strength of French traditions. His first meeting with Mistral was marked by a profound but restrained emotion on the part of Barrès, which charmed the author of "Mireille." At the outset of his career, Barrès' haughty attitude and indifference to popularity caused him to be pestered by a certain number of literary fleas, whose feeble attacks pursued him ever afterwards. But he knew how to make his enemies ridiculous. He would resort to one of those characteristic silences of his, or would emphasize some stupid remark of his victim by a quick smile of which he alone had the secret.

His psychological insight allowed him to gauge immediately a new acquaintance. If the latter did not interest him, he would acquiesce in all his statements, without paying any attention, repeating from time to time, absent mindedly, "Ah, yes, to be sure! Really, how very curious!" On the other hand, few men were quicker to appreciate real merit. These traits, with the pungency of his remarks, his general attitude toward life, his wonderful gift of sympathetic understanding, soon made him a great favorite with my father and Edmond de Goncourt, and I thoroughly shared their liking for him. How many a good laugh we had, they and Barrès and I, like schoolboys in holiday time!

Hardly had Barrès finished his little collection called "Taches d'Encre," with which he made his entry into the literary arena, than he set out to win for himself a seat in the Academy. I expressed my surprise at this ambition, and he replied: "You don't understand, because you are a born Parisian. If you had been reared in the provinces, you would think differently."

Both Barrès and I enjoyed bringing together persons of the most widely different characteristics. I remember once at Paillard's we had collected Georges Hugo, Rodenbach, Mallarmé and Whibley, Whistler's brother-in-law. They fused admirably. Barrès was at his best. Mallarmé took him up, transporting the talk to that fanciful realm, half real, half imaginary, of which he was the unquestioned monarch. Having more than once alternated dry and sweet champagne (in order to appreciate properly the good points of both), we reached a state of lofty beatitude—a state of mind in which the universe and all things in it, including human destiny, appeared to resolve themselves into a series of wonderful harmonics. How sorry we were to see the party break up, between three and four in the morning! This side of Barrès, gay, imaginative, as appreciative of the good things of life as a character of Calderon or Cervantes, is less generally known than is his more serious self, the Barrès that appeared in the solemn sessions of the Forty Immortals or at the quarrelsome sessions of the Chamber of Deputies, or at the gatherings which marked the revival of our national spirit. That is why I refer to it here. I wish to give my readers an idea of the diversity of his richly varied nature. He appeared to best advantage when at his ease, surrounded by tried and true companions.

Another quality which I admired in him was his courage. My father recognized in him a man who would be of great value to France, and he was not mistaken. Maurice Barrès has done much to combat our enemies.

Marcel Schwob, whom I have already mentioned as a classmate at Louis-le-Grand, was a Jew with the soul of an anarchist. He always believed that he hated his own race until, at the time of the Dreyfus affair, he fought for his people with all his might. Before that, he loathed them. Once he happened to be at Guernsey at the same time as the Hebrew lawyer and politician, Ignace, a wordy, silly fellow, who, in those days, looked like a loose-jointed oriental idol of varnished teak. Schwob confided to me, "That man makes me sick. Do you think there is any way I could kill him without people noticing it?" Marcel was mild in manner, but used delightfully exaggerated expressions.

He had a piecemeal mind, like that of a lawyer's clerk; it never grasped an idea or an object as a whole, but it gave to fragments, such as old texts and dead languages, a sort of revived youth. He was thoroughly familiar with four literatures, French, German, English, and Hebrew. He was widely read in all of them, and quoted freely, establishing all sorts of unexpected but well-founded parallels and differences. You should have heard him recite passages from Daniel Defoe, whose "Moll Flanders," the story of a female thief in London, he was just translating, or from some such play as Cyril Tourneur's "The Atheist's Tragedy," or Ford's " 'Tis a Pity she's a Whore," or some other, by one of Shakespeare's contemporaries. He had a mysterious, velvety and penetrating voice, a glance as green and brilliant as the last glint of sunshine on the waves. These corrected his intense, almost dramatic, racial ugliness, with its thick lips, like pieces of fat pork. Clean shaven, he reminded one of a Jewish actor, sorcerer, and ghetto hag, combined. I have said that his ugliness was almost dramatic. It was actually so in a sense, since it was the source of his endless misadventures. Schwob, poor fellow, was inordinately vain, and had a mania for falling head over heels in love with any and every pretty, young, and agreeable woman who was in the least polite to him. In our circle of friends and acquaintances there was no lack of such women. The most ordinary act of courtesy he took as a manifestation of love, and, at once, he constructed an entire romance for himself out of nothing at all. Georges Hugo and I assumed the thankless task of disillusioning him. "It's your turn now," Georges would say to me, laughing. "Schwob has caught fire again; time to turn on the hose." It was not always so easy to quench the conflagration. But finally, by dint of many efforts, and much good advice, I would manage to do so. Then Schwob sulked. We would catch a glimpse of him sitting by his window in the rue Hauteville, absorbed in a dictionary and very angry indeed. Three days later he would begin again. We always knew when one of these attacks was coming on, for Schwob, not generally very particular about his dress, would burst forth in evening clothes at five in the afternoon, with a pathetic little pearl pin and a pair of bright yellow shoes. A general panic followed among the ladies. "Whom is he after this time?" But, as they admired his wit, they took care not to hurt his feelings. "We treat him as one does a young boy who opens the door 'by mistake' in a hotel," said one of his imaginary conquests.

During one of his visits to Guernsey, Schwob found himself obliged to go to Nantes on some business engagement or other. On his return he embarked on a coaling steamer. His imagination at once transformed the vessel into a dangerous pirate craft, and he was preparing to give us a surprise. The unexpected appearance of his grimy looking vessel in the harbour attracted the attention of the officer in charge of the port, however, and he ordered it to stop and report. The collier replied it was landing a passenger, "a distinguished French journalist by the name of Schwaba." The description created general amusement, which was further increased by the sight of Schwob himself, dressed like an old salt from the pages of his beloved Stevenson. He was most indignant with us for laughing. Indeed, he wanted to leave immediately, and this time it was Georges Hugo who restrained him by hanging on to his tarry coat tails.

This particular form of fancy dress pleased Schwob greatly. During a trip which we made together to Holland, he assumed it for the crossing from the Hook of Holland to Harwich. The unexpected sight of a foreign passenger, rigged up like a musical comedy midshipman, in the middle of the first-class dining saloon, aroused interest that was not altogether friendly, among the other passengers. A head steward was summoned. In emphatic English he requested Schwob to leave the room, and reappear in conventional attire. It was a most amusing scene.

In London, Schwob was as delighted as a child to rediscover the places about which Dickens and De Quincey had written. At a second-rate music hall he noticed a scrawny singer, with an angular profile and aquamarine eyes. He insisted that we wait for her at the stage door. I can still see him, under the electric light, making this girl a long speech in which he compared her to the opium eater's unforgettable little Annie. His suit was no more favourably received on this than on other occasions. When I stop to think of it, there were, in this scholarly, bohemian Hebrew, a good many of the qualities of Don Quixote. This to me was one of the most attractive things about him. Another was his boundless charity toward the "under-dogs," the "down-and-outers," to whom he always distributed generously his meagre pennies.

In Schwob's apartment, up two and a half flights of stairs, at No. 2, rue de l'Université—a sort of lumber-room filled with books and pipes—I sometimes met the poet-playwright and dandy, Oscar Wilde. What a strange being he was! Such a compound of good and evil, of vulgarity and refinement, of vice and idealism, of pose and sincerity, is rarely found in any literature or in any country. This man, who had been so admired, so acclaimed, and later was so much reviled, had in his face and manner something that was altogether fine conflicting with something that was wholly vile. He attracted and repelled you at the same time. He talked delightfully, and was a marvellous story teller, yet one wearied quickly of his conversation. There was about him something morbid, unnatural, as I told him quite frankly when, the third time we met, he inquired, "And what do you think of me, Monsieur Léon Daudet?"

He did not reply directly to my criticism, but the following day I received from him a long, involved epistle at the end of which was affixed his flamboyant signature. In it he assured me that I had made a mistake, that he was really the simplest, most candid of mortals, "just like a tiny, tiny child." (At the same time he sent me a copy of his "Salome," an imitation of Flaubert and Maeterlinck, which Strauss, the German composer, has set to music.) I probably still have among my papers this unsolicited account of his character, which bore so clearly the mark of his psycho-pathological stigmata. Wilde was the kind of man whose company one can enjoy only by cutting one's normal life in two, and devoting half exclusively to him. In the course of six years he quarreled and made up with Schwob more than a dozen times.

Here is one of the stories Wilde told us, sitting at a table in a restaurant. He spoke in a faint yet hoarse voice, sticking out his horrible, loose lips and reciting his narrative as though it were an incantation. I can hear him now: "Once upon a time, there was a boy, a young fisherman, who, like so many poor boys, was a great liar. Every evening, when he came back to shore, he would tell all about having seen a siren." As he pronounced the word "siren," Wilde raised his left hand up even with his right, which held his cigarette, and blew the smoke between them,—"But one evening he actually saw a siren; that evening he told no story at all." A silence followed, to allow the listeners to develop in their own minds the purport of the anecdote. Then Wilde burst into a hearty laugh, like that of a fat, middle-class woman well pleased with herself, and ordered up some complicated drink or other.

The intellectual bond between Wilde and Schwob was their common admiration for François Villon, about whom Schwob has written some interesting pages, and their affection for the criminal classes, and for the picturesque qualities of outlaws, pirates and pickpockets. Both jabbered thieves' argot fluently. Schwob had a mind that was really fine, free from any secret vice, and a Semitically sentimental code of morals, whereas Wilde's soul, poisoned as though by some secret spring of venom, affected all his thoughts. In short, he was one of those unfortunate victims of hereditary disease, who bear too heavy a weight of evil atavism for their feeble will. In person, he was stout and flabby, hideous in the lower part of his face, but his forehead, his temples, and the manner in which his eyes were placed, were almost majestic. Talkative and gossipy, as are all those who suffer from his disease, Wilde was constantly seeking to belittle this person or that, or else pretending that someone had libelled him. In order to justify himself, he slandered others, in his turn. Finally I asked Schwob to try to avoid having me meet so fatiguing a creature. Several years later, when I read the details of his trial, I appreciated the correctness of my early impressions.

Schwob and I were among the first to recognize and acclaim the vigourous originality of Paul Claudel, who had just published "Tête d'Or" and "La Ville," and who was preparing a translation of the "Agamemnon" of Æschylus. Our late consul at Frankfort [1] had a Roman profile, a curt manner of speech, and great influence over a section of the younger generation. The talent of Claudel may be compared to a strong wine, with a rich earthy tang, rather bitter, and not yet decantered or fully settled. I mean that there is no sharp dividing line between his ardent sensitiveness towards material things and his stern mysticism. These alternations between fire and ice, in both his vocabulary and subject matter, without intermediate stages, are the reason why inattentive, superficial readers declare he is difficult to understand, and say, "I give up; Claudel's too hard for me." Gifted with the rare talent of some mediæval workman, Claudel is one of the elect. He is a man of the most infinite scruples, whose intellectual honesty amounts almost to obstinacy, and whose phrases are almost too highly keyed for ordinary mortals. I prefer him in his brilliant, glowing works, such as the "Connaissance de l'Est," which carries one off bodily to China, or the mystery play, "La Nuit de Noël de 1914," which is comparable to some marvellous stained-glass window of the twelfth century. Claudel's conversation is as vigorous, as sibylline, as abrupt and breathless as his style. He will say of Shakespeare, for instance: "The finest things in his work are the voices," a phrase worth a whole volume of laborious criticism. Stupidity and vulgarity make Claudel blush for humanity; they offend his recognition of men and women as works of God. He deals with the finite as though it were the infinite. Dominating the visions which unroll themselves simultaneously but in logical sequence in his brain, he refashions reality in accordance with his imagination. None other among our contemporary writers has discovered metaphors as magnificent as his; they are strong as the athletes of old, and pungent with the salt of truth.

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[1] This was written in 1915. Claudel has been, since then, Ambassador to Japan. (Translator's note.)

CHAPTER XIII

Some Figures of the 90's—Félicien Rops, the Etcher—Henri Lavedan, "a Parisian Oriental"—Forain and Caran d'Ache—Helleu and Boldini—a Fête at Versailles—Fernand Xau and the Founding of "Le Journal."

HERE is a collection of characters and incidents, important or otherwise, which set forth some of the high lights of Parisian literary and artistic society during the 1890's. I choose them at haphazard; they are linked only in time.

As everyone knows, the etcher Félicien Rops was a haunted man. Tall, handsome, and haughty, he looked like a mediæval man-at-arms. He had the wiry mustache, the little pointed beard, the triangular face and the constantly shifting glance of the ruffler. All he lacked was the velvet doublet and the rapier. Rops spoke very rapidly, piling words on top of one another as one stacks bricks on a wall, and inventing extraordinary anecdotes as he went along. He believed them as fast as he made them up. Sometimes, these tales were about his life in South America, when he spent his days on horseback. He pictured to us the magic of the vast pampas under the noonday sun, or he described how he and a couple of boon companions had hacked their path through the trackless wilderness; how, alone in a canoe, he had hunted the polar bear and the walrus in the midst of the ice fields. He had been the hero of exploits enough to fill fifty well-spent lives. It was all quite imaginary, but so circumstantial, so minutely detailed, that it became a work of art.

His imagination bit into Rops' brain as an acid into a copper plate, and traced there all sorts of unexpected, and astonishing, yet realistic pictures. Listening to him was like watching a play. It was useless to interrupt, for, like a skilful cobbler, he would always pick up the thread again and make the most of it. At meal time he hardly took time to drink, and gulped down his food unchewed, for fear someone might start a conversation and interfere with his yarns. I fancy that he suffered from "phasia," the opposite of "aphasia," causing an incessant flow of words. One curious thing about this artist, many of whose pictures are of a kind fit to be exhibited only in secret museums, was that his language was extremely chaste. He hid his sexual mania as a child conceals its greediness. Armand Gouzien, his intimate friend, to whom I spoke about this once, told me, "In spite of never mentioning it, he thinks about nothing else." "Then all his talkativeness is mere camouflage?" "That's it, exactly."

Henri Lavedan is a Chinese, a Parisian Oriental, an eastern executioner who has lost his job and who has to be satisfied with torturing the French language. Many things about Lavedan remind one of a Chinese—his slanting eyes, his puffy, wrinkled face, his carefully assumed good manners, his ritualistic bowings and scrapings; even his smell, a combination of sandalwood and soured rage, as well as his trickiness, his fondness for involved situations, for secret betrayals, for long-planned murderous projects. Lavedan deserves one of those prizes for virtue which the Academy bestows at its most solemn sittings, for having restrained his desire to cut up all his contemporaries, beginning with his dearest friends, into a thousand and one pieces.

If a journalist dares to wound Lavedan with even a pin-prick, the latter takes great care to have the offender informed that he does not mind in the least—indeed, that he is a great admirer of the newspaper man's talent. While he dishes out this soothing syrup, Lavedan goes to work and sets a-boiling his vengeful dose, a regular witches' broth, a deadly mixture prepared on moonless nights and compounded of frogs and toads and vipers' gall. Lavedan might be surnamed the unsuccessful conspirator. He likes old pieces of furniture because they may contain secret drawers and letters written in cipher; he dotes on hiding places in cupboards or walls. He is entirely in his element with the Naundorf farce. He finds in this imitation of an historical enigma an excuse for not being himself a psychological mystery.

As a writer, Lavedan attempts to be ultra-refined, rare and flowery in his style. The result is a hideous rococo, falsely naïve, a sort of Rostand in prose. His articles in the "Illustration" remind one of those queer, useless objects made of shells and horsehair, or of those strange villas one sees at the sea-side, looking like mosque and pagoda rolled into one, from which, at ten in the morning, some fat, common woman emerges, in faded pink taffeta dress, sandals and straw hat. I always think of such a scene when I read Lavedan. Sometimes he writes in a tone of gay, carefree bohemianism; sometimes his attitude is that of a fashionable preacher or a great hearted philanthropist. His subjects vary, also. They may be "Life in the Country," "Domestic Virtue in the Good Old Days," "The Bed Slippers of Napoleon's Marshals," "Rosaries," "Rat Traps," "The Archbishop's Carriage," "Country Lawyers"—any and every sort of mental pabulum for pale-minded people, for old fogies and retired grocerymen. This sort of public claps its hands admiringly, and exclaims, "My, how well he writes!"

Behind all this sickly sentimentality I recognize the gall and wormwood; behind these too facile tears I see the serpent's fangs; behind these rows of sweetmeats the sinister shadow of the Roman poisoner. This adaptation of the largest and blackest bile bladder in Paris to the work of turning out idylls and madrigals fills me with enthusiasm. What a fine personage for one of your bitter comedies, O wandering spirit of rare Ben Jonson!

"Is he good? Is he bad?" asked Diderot, speaking of himself. Apply these questions to Forain, and the answer will be, "Both, at the same time"; or else, "He knows how to draw." The man himself, his work, his voice, the stories which one hears about him, all these combine to form a striking whole, and make one shiver. He is short, compact in stature, a being of fire, of laughter, of tears. Hardly has he caught sight of something than he has already resolved it into its essentials. His eye, swift as that of the great Leonardo, seeks to discern the moral motives that govern the muscles, the vices and virtues that control the actions of human beings. This gift is inborn, but he wants to push it to the utmost limit, and his effort sometimes gets the better of his nerves. Then, figuratively, he gnashes his teeth, adds a line here, rubs out one there, tears up his sketches, regains control of himself, and by eliminating and simplifying brings his dragon, still untamed, into line with the traditions of classic art.

Some love Forain, others hate him. I am fond of him, in spite of all the cheap jokes he has made or will make about me. I cannot be angry with him for his remarks; they are part of his ferocious humour, his abounding vitality—that vitality which has flowed from him for the past sixty years without ever emptying the reservoir. I like him, too, for his laughter, which is as stirring as the echoes of the trumpets of Jericho, and for his grunts and mutterings, which are intended to win your approval of his most violent remarks. Above all, I like him because he is a real child of Pantruche,[1] the only city in the world where knaves and fools are properly pilloried and where externals count for nothing. Merely to meet Forain casually is a relief.

In memory's fruitful limbo, exceptional persons are forever linked with some special setting. They continue forever to re-enact for you some scene which you happened to witness. For instance, it is impossible for me to catch a glimpse of Forain at a table at Weber's, in the rue Royale, without seeing beside him the ghost of poor Caran d'Ache. I see Caran with a flower in his buttonhole, his hair carefully brushed, his suit cut in the very latest fashion, and with that merry, ironic glance of his. This glance was hypocritically shy when he was speaking to the ladies; it stripped them in an instant as an expert nurse strips an infant.

"Where have you been, you naughty boy?" Forain would call out, when he caught sight of him, and Caran d'Ache would blush, or grow pale, and order his cup of sugared milk, which he loved as though he were a cat. He was always madly in love. Now it would be with a dairymaid in the rue de l'Université, now with a chambermaid at Passy or a dressmaker's apprentice in the rue Royale. He spent his days roaming about in quest of adventure, and generally worked at night in his little house in the rue de la Faisanderie. If he happened to be at home in the morning, he put on a blue jacket that fitted as tightly as a corset, and a snowy apron, and politely told strange callers, "Monsieur Caran d'Ache is not at home."

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[1] A slang term for Paris. (Translator's note.)

Forain was always teasing Caran. The latter bore it patiently, for he admired his tormentor, and his abuse delighted him. But the tone of the conversation would change whenever the two great draughtsmen spoke of their art. Forain's profound thought, the keen observation of his companion, and the contact of these qualities, lifted their talk to a very high level. I remember one of these conversations, one starry night by the sea. Forain was positively amazing. How can I hope to reproduce the sparkling, flashing brilliance of that comprehensive intellect, or the tone or that voice, slow and drawling, then suddenly as rapid as a knife thrust—or the gestures, the shrug of the shoulders, the movement of the hands seeking to mould the air, the short, sharp, half-enthusiastic, half-mocking phrases, or the "Now then! Now then!" followed by a short silence, or by some irresistible argument.

"But where does he get all those ideas of his?" a fool once asked about Forain. "In your greasy hide, my friend! Can't you see it's the sight of your stupidity that sets him going?"

Forain replied once to a man who questioned him about his method of working, especially how he got his captions: "I make a drawing, then I listen to what it has to say." Another time, speaking of the self-important wife of some government official who had no manners whatever, he remarked, "She's one of those persons who thinks politeness was abolished at the time of the Revolution."

Other artists of the same period were a rather talented cockroach called Boldini, and Helleu, black, thin and venomous. Boldini has a hexagonal face. He is as broad as he is tall. He paints epileptic females who end in a point or a spiral, and who pose on waxed floors or contort themselves in low armchairs like she-cats who have had too much catnip. Helleu draws and draws and draws. He has been nicknamed the Watteau with the steam-engine attachment. His subjects are long, languid ladies with waists like clinging vines, who lean forward in abandoned attitudes and roll ecstatic eyes, but always remain quite proper. These qualities have contributed to his success with the French upper-middle classes, and in

America, where he represents audacity in art and a moderate degree of sensuality. The popularity of his dry points is surpassed only by that of the chromo. Helleu was gifted with a fair talent when he began; now he has become merely a manufacturer. He imitates his own style, as happens with all artists who do not seek to renew their art. He and Boldini seize one of their fellow-painters every day, tear him to bits, and chew him up mouthful by mouthful. If game is scarce, they devour each other. I always expect to hear that Helleu has poisoned himself by swallowing some of his own saliva, or that Boldini has given himself blood-poisoning by scratching his own leg. We used to call them Scylla and Charybdis. When you perceive them in the distance, set all sail in the opposite direction, O fellow mariners! (And here let me make a parenthetical observation. I hold that persons who are unnecessarily spiteful are diseased. If they spread poisoned gases round about them, it is because something is rotten in their own insides. A poor chap whom I was obliged to discharge from the "Action Française" on account of a stupid and libellous remark which he had made, told me, weeping as he did so, "It was more than I could do not to say it; I simply could not help myself." I am sure this form of perversion can be treated and cured. But as far as Boldini and Helleu are concerned, I am not prepared to operate; they are too far gone.)

By way of contrast, let me say that there is nothing of the reptile about Pierre de Nolhac. His character is fine and generous. Nolhac is a scholar, a great humanist from the days of the Renaissance, who hides behind his eye-glasses a fresh, youthful, smiling countenance. Here is a man who knows, who feels, who understands. He is subtle, and capable of distinguishing the important from the unimportant, of telling a copy from an original. He is in the habit of saying, "I am a fanatic in my love for moderation." As curator of the Palace of Versailles, he created the museum there, restored the gardens, and brought back to life the spirit of the former glories of the royal residence. To do all this required good taste, perseverance and courage, and Pierre de Nolhac possesses them all. He is a poet—at times even a great poet. Certain verses of his will endure. He writes in the firm, measured manner of the classics, of Villon, Malherbe, Ronsard and Racine. What he says means something; more than that, it allows a reader to carry his own thought still further, it leaves a margin for one's own notes. Do you not loathe a rhymed garrulity? For me, no matter how spontaneous, how ingenious it may be, it is boresome almost to the death. Nowadays we have makers of verses who can produce hundreds of lines an hour, as a fly lays its myriads of eggs. You feel they could write thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, just as easily. It marks the triumph of the sauce over the fish, of twaddle over sense, of sentimentality over sentiment, of sentiment over the mind. It is an overproduction from below—I mean from those confused, obscure regions that are swayed only by instinct. It is the continual overflow of the ego—of an ego, poor, little and weazened, nevertheless full of that pale, superabundant fluid, self-satisfaction. Everything is grist to that mill—Greece, Italy, France of the former days, the Revolution and its anniversaries, Persia, Egypt, India, the Far East. "Will that be all for to-day, madame?" But why talk any more of Rostand?

I remember seeing Nolhac hurrying hither and thither, with that gliding, stealthy step of his, in the midst of a semi-successful fête given by Robert de Montesquiou in the gardens of the Petit Trianon. To Nolhac fell the task of supplying the Parisian savages with any historical explanations which they happened to need. It was a glorious summer's afternoon, with a sun that might have been mistaken for the emblem of the Grand Monarch, but which was not flattering to short, fat women in light-colored dresses. The idea of having a garden party in this setting was one of those too attractive fancies one has after an especially good dinner, but which one should never attempt to bring to realization. No matter how skilfully a reconstruction is carried out, in actuality, it can never come up to what the imagination evokes in silence and solitude. In every corner of the lawns the spectator caught a glimpse of the grey coat of "the noble lord," his host. To some of the guests Montesquiou would merely say, "Isn't this all *too* wonderful?" to others he would recite lengthy fragments of his own verses, while the victims looked as uncomfortable as cats in a shower. Abel Hermant, very small, very pink, very fluffy, declared, as he winked his eyes, "It's quite charming," and went on making notes for his next novel. Gabriel Yturri, Montesquiou's secretary, introduced calf-like gentlemen to ladies with necks and shoulders like skinny fowls. But the appearance of Madame Bartet, a lovely vision in a pink gown, completely transformed the menagerie. As the sun was setting, she read us some verses, of which I can recall neither the subject nor the author, —possibly it was some more Montesquiou. But I have not forgotten the lovely, delicate, intelligent profile of the fairy-like actress, her soft complexion, the sparkle of her eyes, the lines of her body as she leaned against a pillar. The music of her voice was like tinkling pearls. Hermant looked less like a fierce little doll, and Yturri suddenly became tongue-tied and could express his enthusiasm in nothing but a frantic pantomime. I believe it was the Italian, Count Primoli, a relative of the Princess Mathilde, who, at the end of the recital, tiptoed forward like a stout tom-cat and, with languishing glances, took the little, warm hand of Madame Bartet in both his own while he assured her, in the name of the Senate and the People of Rome, of our universal admiration.

While speaking of Madame Bartet, I must tell those who in later years will read these outspoken memoirs, that she was the greatest actress of our generation. Others had a vaster, wider fame, but Bartet alone, in spite of her simple manner, understood and respected the music of poetry. She alone knew how to interpret Racine's "Bérénice," and could express in melody the most heart-rending emotions. To me, she represented the perfection of French art. She possessed that indescribable quality which makes old men say, with nodding heads, "Ah, if only you could have seen her!" At the height of her career she reminded one of a nightingale perched on a swaying branch, singing away. To listen to her was to be moved to tears.

* * *

Fernand Xau, who was the real founder of that great newspaper, "Le Journal," was an active little person, a good business man, and fond of a spree now and then. His figure was short and rather squat, his face was extremely plain, and he was always hoarse.

He was a likable chap, and exceedingly polite. He spoke very fast, like a street peddler, and he constantly brought into his conversation the two self-deprecating phrases, "Oh, thank you so much!" and "I really beg your pardon." He had made his way up from the bottom, was quite uneducated, but had a keen journalistic instinct and a nose for news. He admired writers and literary folk generally.

It was during a holiday at the seashore, about the time of the Panama scandals, that Xau, then an inconspicuous newspaper man, first met Eugène Letellier. The latter was a contractor, ready to make a bid for any sort of enterprise on the market. Well dressed and carefully groomed, brushed and curricombed by a skilful valet, he was, at that time, a solid enough figure. Nature had endowed him with a fine, deep bass voice of which he made amusing capital. He was generous, dictatorial, and always in a hurry, like an American business man. He and his friends resented a glimpse they had recently caught of the police doing their duty in connection with a certain bribery case and making arrests right and left, both of corrupters and corrupted. Xau made it clear to Letellier how useful an influential newspaper in Paris might be to him both in his public affairs, such as the construction of the forts along the Meuse, and privately, in the way of tickets to the theatre, introductions to chorus girls, and so on, and old daddy Letellier allowed himself to be won over. He provided the capital, and turned over the administrative side of the new enterprise to his brother Léon. The latter was a very nice chap, with better manners than any of the rest of them, but hopelessly dominated by Eugène. All that now remained was to secure contributors—an easy matter since, thanks to Xau's efforts, rumours had already gone about that a flood of millions was on tap in the rue de Richelieu, where the paper had, and still has, its office.

The recruiting sergeant was Catulle-Abraham Mendès. This Semitic refugee from Sodom was extremely shrewd, in spite of his romantic appearance, and continually on the lookout for changes in the newspaper world. Once his connection with a paper was established, he would begin by demanding a large sum on account, thus producing a deep impression on the editor. Xau proved to Letellier that any paper that had Mendès on the staff would be sure to have the support of the latter's faithful readers—that is, all the smut-lovers, a host in themselves. Mendès also possessed the knack of dazzling any business man with whom he came in contact, thanks to his skill in showing off his thin smattering of education. He would seize his listener's buttonhole, and question him on his opinion of Wagner and Hugo, the real merits of Jean-Paul Richter, the subtlety of Heinrich Heine, and the latter's superiority to Goethe. Letellier, the contractor, had never in his life heard of any of these gentlemen, and imagined they were all future contributors. Consequently, he did not try to bargain with this long-haired poet who smelled of ether and had such remarkable acquaintances.

Nor was Xau inactive. He obtained Armand Gouzien as musical critic, and arranged for weekly contributions from Coppée, Barrès, Madame Séverine and Alexandre Hepp, as well as articles or novels for serial publication from Mirbeau, Georges Courteline, Georges d'Esparbès, and the humorist, Alphonse Allais. I gave him my novel entitled "Suzanne," and, a little later, "Sébastien Gouvès." The paper caught on immediately, the articles by Coppée and Barrès being especially widely read and commented on, so much so, in fact, that old Letellier, very proud of himself, declared, "All my friends speak to me about them." From this remark we obtained a vision of successful but enlightened contractors engrossed in the magnificent epitomes of Barrès or the ironic, good-natured prose of Coppée.

Léon Letellier, a more genuine Mæcenas than his brother, used to give literary dinners and receptions at his house in the rue Alphonse de Neuville, the same which later sheltered Edmond Rostand and the hat-box containing his anemic halo. I remember especially well one of those evenings at Letellier's. Among the guests were six little dancers who happened to be very popular just then, the Berenson sisters. While the more serious people, or those who posed as such, were entertained downstairs with glimpses of really-truly members of the Academy and future Immortals such as Hanotaux, the young men and the bachelors had supper on the first floor with the dancers and their manager. One of my friends having plied the latter steadily with champagne, the worthy gentleman became extremely drunk. Georges d'Esparbès, always good-hearted and especially so after plenty of Moët and Chandon, pointed out to me the dangers of the situation: "Just think, here's this creature dead drunk, not able to take the girls home safely. What will become of them, poor little things, out at night in the midst of the perils of Paris?" "You'll have to take care of them, Georges. You'll protect them, keep them from getting into trouble or making undesirable acquaintances. Besides, you can recite poems to them out of your new book, 'Les Légendes de l'Aigle.' "

D'Esparbès and his legends, picturesque and vehement, scored a great success. Everything that recalled Napoleon, the three-cornered hat and the grey frock coat, was fashionable at that moment. Coppée, enthusiastic as usual and a believer in the sincerity of the "Mémorial de Saint-Hélène," had hailed the rising glory of d'Esparbès. The latter, however, was not a bit vain and went from group to group bewailing the sponge-like qualities of the manager of the Berensons.

Reckless Léon Letellier, with his dinners and his popularity among his contributors, aroused the envy of his nephew Henri Letellier, son of Eugène. Henri was still young at the time, but he was already the owner of that extraordinarily prominent nose which has since made him famous. When, several years later, the nose and its owner took a more active part in directing the policy of the paper, they made trouble for Léon, who was finally compelled to leave the board of directors. Still later, this same murderous, treacherous nose attacked Fernand Xau. While it did not actually pierce him through and through like the kriss of a Malay, it tortured him in various ways, and hastened his death. Hanotaux and Heredia, one carrying the other on his back and both dragging Henri de Régnier along with them, imagined that by flattering this dangerous proboscis, by stroking it, embracing it, feeding it with lollipops, they might mollify it and make it do as they wanted. What a mistake they made! The nose escaped, turned against them, and drove them out, cruelly wounded.

The news of the terrible fire at the Charity Bazaar was brought to the "Journal" by Mariéton, who stuttered. None of the regular reporters would believe his story. In vain he kept adding one harrowing detail after another, stuttering more and more as he did so: "I've j-j-j-just c-c-come from the C-C-C-Cours la Reine. I s-s-s-saw them bringing out the c-c-c-c-corpses!" "Go away with your rotten jokes. If a thing like that had happened we should have heard about it long ago. We've got five telephones and an admirably equipped service." This indifference ended by infuriating Mariéton, who went out slamming the door behind him. A few minutes later the cries of the newsboys selling a special edition of the "Intransigeant" forced the mockers to realize that he had been telling the truth. Xau jumped up and down, yelling and calling on heaven and earth to witness the stupidity and the laziness of his assistants. A quarter of an hour later, fifty men had been despatched to get the full details, the most sensational interviews. Thirty of them got no further than the Café Cardinal, on the corner of the boulevard, and the rest stopped off here and there between the office and the scene of the disaster. But the paper came out the next morning as usual. I am inclined to think that even in America, the home of the "interview" and the sensational "story," things happen in much the same way. I have known only one reporter who actually made his notes on the spot; the others declared he would ruin the business if he kept on.

On the other hand, the sudden death of Félix Faure, in 1899, the news of which reached the office pretty early in the day, gave rise to all sorts of fantasic rumours and guesses. Everyone had his own absolutely authentic account of what had taken place, each story being, of course, entirely different from all the others. According to one version, Faure had shot himself, according to another, he had taken poison. Some said that he had thrown himself out of a window. There were two versions of this last account—one that it was a window at the palace of the Élysée, while the other specified a window of a rooming house in the avenue d'Iéna. Still other stories said that he had been assassinated by a man, a woman, a man and a woman, two women, masked conspirators, a servant, a German agent, a member of the police force. Those who had a little more imagination insisted that he was not dead at all, but had escaped to America to avoid a tremendous scandal that was brewing. "But his body is at the Élysée!" "It's not really his body, it's a dummy. One of the ministers told me so." Each new arrival brought some new detail, some fresh rumour, or a different explanation of one of the earlier ones. Lauze, who has seen everything and whom nothing can upset, listened placidly to all the noise, smoking his pipe the while. "This kind of thing never gets cleared up till eleven or twelve o'clock—or else not till fifty years later. Meanwhile, let's get to work," he said. He always superintended the editing of the paper with the greatest care, and I wonder how Letellier and Xau would have got along if he had not been there. A daily paper depends primarily on its night editor.

CHAPTER XIV

Three Foreign Fallacies and Their Influence on French Thought—Tolstoyism or Russian Pathos—Ibsenism and Northern Mistiness—The Teachings of Nietzsche—A Great Defender of France, Madame Edmond Adam—-Paul Bourget and His Theory of the Novel.

DURING the years between 1885 and 1898 French genius in both literature and music was overshadowed by certain foreigners, representative figures in their own countries, or who were considered so to be, on whom the high-brows lavished all their favour. I have already spoken of Wagneromania and will now deal with those other currents, Tolstoyism, Ibsenomania and Nietzscheism.

The treacherous and envious Turgenieff had many acquaintances in France, and did his best to keep the light of his former friend and successful rival, Tolstoy, under a bushel. Nevertheless, my father read "War and Peace" as soon as it appeared in translation. He became enthusiastic. Almost at the same time appeared a series of articles by Melchoir de Vogüé on the Russian Novel. Admiration for the author of "Anna Karenina" and "War and Peace" coincided with a wave of pacifistic and anarchistic humanitarianism which endorsed the paradoxical form of rural life he led. The humanitarian movement, a result of our defeat and the Treaty of Frankfort, took him up and recommended, and almost sanctified, the feeblest, most old-fashioned parts of his work. The yeast of "Les Misérables" and the remaining flotsam of the Romantic movement rose to the surface after the publication of his "Resurrection." The pessimists, disciples of Hartmann and Schopenhauer, on the other hand acclaimed "The Power of Darkness." The silly flock of "Christian Democrats," feeling their way toward the heresy known twenty years later as Modernism, greeted with excited bleatings of joy the appearance of this false prophet, this great, dreamy, watery-eyed old man. Finally, his doctrine of non-resistance was preached by every Jewish banker, every financial pirate and usurer in Paris.

The Natanson brothers were directors of a periodical called "La Revue Blanche" in which Tolstoyan theories flourished exuberantly. Their contributors included one Léon Blum, the sort of Jew who imagines that he is good-looking because he wears his hat on the side of his head and has a little, straight nose in the middle of a set of too regular features, the absurd logician, Rémy de Gourmont, and some other symbolo-ghettoists. All these people tolstoyised separately and together. All declared that never, never, never would there be another war, that it was ridiculous to prepare for one, that no one cared a penny for Alsace-Lorraine, that it wasn't worth worrying about anyway, that all army officers were fools and that patriotism was nothing but an idea and a silly one at that. In fact, one came across constantly any number of silly theories said to be part of Tolstoy's teachings. The poor old lunatic certainly contributed, through his disciples, to our unpreparedness in 1914. One should always beware of aristocrats and millionaires who go about in wooden shoes, and mend their blouses and trousers themselves. As the true gospel teaches us, "Beware of wolves in sheep's clothing."

With Ibsent and Ibsenomania we come to another form of mental deformity. It was Rosenthal-Saint-Cère, who later was tried for blackmail and became notorious as a German agent, who "revealed" (as we said) Ibsen to Antoine, who in turn "revealed" him to Lugné Poë. The latter, founder of the Théâtre de l'Œuvre, is really a nice fellow, and not a bit like an actor. In everyday life he is intelligent and agreeable, but he feels obliged to be always discovering new dramatists. He has succumbed to all the northern magi in turn, Bjœrnsterne, Bjœrson and Strindberg, but his chief love has always been Ibsen. Dressed in a black or grey robe, his chest puffed out, Poë acts the Norwegian's plays in a spirit of ecstasy, chanting his lines like a psalm-singer. I believe that it was the Master himself, that combination of a Schopenhauer and beer-garden hell-cat, who taught him these methods. The works of the author of "Peer Gynt" and "The Master-Builder" are, one and all, obscure and confused. His imagination shows sometimes a lyric beauty; often it is original and always pathetic; but it is enveloped in an atmosphere of mist. Ibsen's laughter is a grimace, his melancholy a prolonged stomach-ache, his dialogue a series of mutual reproaches. Every one of his characters has suicidal tendencies. Their passions are haunted by their fears. They seem to live in cellars of bitterness, pessimism, and futile concupiscence. If that is what love is like in northern lands, then long live Romeo and Juliet, Don Quixote and Dulcinea.

Twenty years ago, Parisian "first-nighters" were overcome with admiration at the sight of Ibsen's characters suffering from "soul hunger." At the first "revelation" of "Rosmersholm," a well-known member of the Comédie fainted with enthusiasm. Away with Shakespeare and Racine! Only Henrik (insist on the k) Ibsen has ever penetrated so far into the human soul, blubber-lamp in hand—and emerged thence with actual, authentic stalactites. In vain did Lemaître, with the luminous common sense of the Loire country, attempt to remind the victims of this Ibsenomania of the laws of logic. The fanatics would pay no attention; Lemaître was considered a superficial writer, an ignoramus.

In Ibsen's plays all the characters are victims of Fate. Devoured by doubt, they seek some means of escape—through a door, out of a window, off the top of the roof, over a precipice, anywhere so long as they can get away from themselves. For one act it is interesting; the thing is unusual. In the second act it becomes annoying. In the third act, any catastrophe is welcome that does away with the horrible bores. I would gladly sacrifice this entire literature of gloom and needless suffering, for a single line of "Othello." The entire work of the "Northern Giant" reminds me of a dead body lying in a room of some second-rate lodging-house in the dim twilight of a winter's day.

After a few years the sickening insipidity of psuedo-Tolstoyism and the misty confusion of the Ibsenites led naturally to a reaction. Curiously enough this based itself on the writings of another foreigner. Friedrich Nietzsche was partly Slav and partly German, but he was greatly influenced by French literature. Jules de Goncourt declared that pictures are the cause of more silly remarks than anything else. Nevertheless the books of this overnervous

Teuton, especially "Thus Spake Zarathustra," provoked a positive flood of idiotic comment. There was a time when every serious French magazine contained either an attack on, or a defence of, the doctrines of "the eternal return," "the morality of the master," "the gospel of force," "the revaluation of moral standards." A donkey plays a prominent part in "Zarathustra"; he deserves a still more important one in the bibliography of the writer thereof.

Nietzsche was accused of worshipping violence, a meaningless phrase since the use of violence is necessary in all useful enterprises in this world, and to despise it leads to slavery. The violence of those who are right must triumph over the violence of those who are wrong, that is all. His biting criticism of Germanism, on the other hand, is very much to the point. "The Case of Richard Wagner" comes very close to being a masterpiece. Also his gospel of force had a good effect on us, as it stimulated some of our native neo-Buddhists, I mean the Tolstoyists and Ibsenites, and kept them, for a little while, away from theories of non-resistance and the contemplation of their own navels.

Opposed to these invasions by foreign influences, we had the "Nouvelle Revue" and its founder, Madame Edmond Adam, the very incarnation of the spirit of Heroism and Patriotism, who, during the troubled period of which we are now speaking, made her magazine the standard-bearer of the national cause, the reconquest of the Lost Provinces. I admire, I worship Madame Edmond Adam. For a quarter of a century I have referred to her as "my dear leader." It was she who published my first article. Later she guided me maternally past the pitfalls that threaten the beginner in literature and journalism. More than that, it was she who sowed in my heart a logical hatred of the German Beast, a hatred that will endure to my dying day.

Madame Adam, for forty-four years, from 1870 to 1914, sustained our confidence and our hopes untiringly. Her influence has been enormous. Never has she been discouraged, never has she laid aside the weapons with which, day after day, she has carried on her struggle against the Enemy. I know what I am saying, for I have watched her at work. She has confided in me and I know the extent to which she sacrificed herself in many ways, her passion for self-denial.

Madame Adam had inspired Gambetta. From the day when, disappointed and disillusioned, she withdrew her protection from this vain and untrustworthy demagogue, he collapsed. Many people have critized her for her disclosures in regard to the ambiguous conduct of a popular leader. As a matter of fact, she was merciful to the crafty and impetuous Italian whom she had hoped to raise to power and keep there as a sort of living symbol of the Next War. The facts were simple enough. Gambetta and his clique, with the exception of that honest man, Edmond Adam, secretly admired Bismarck and planned to bring about a Franco-German reconciliation based on an anti-catholic and anti-papal policy. There was only one obstacle in the way—Madame Adam. They dismissed her lightly enough; "after all she is only a woman." The plans progressed, she learned what was going on, and burst into a terrific rage. She severed her connection with those who she considered were betraying their trust, she alone, or almost alone, continued the struggle.

This is Madame Adam's method of undertaking a campaign. Picking up a sheet of paper she sketches her plan on it. Once the plan is made she keeps to it. In this instance, admirably informed regarding German politics and policies, armed with the brand new "Nouvelle Revue," to which she sacrificed the greater part of her fortune, she set herself to achieve a fourfold purpose. First, to keep up the courage of the patriots in Alsace-Lorraine and defend them against anybody and everybody; second, to overthrow Bismarck; third, to bring about a Franco-Russian alliance; fourth, to prepare diplomatic and military circles for the Next War—*la Révanche.* To-day we recognize that she achieved these ends. It took forty years, but she succeeded.

Naturally, Madame Adam's house was the headquarters of the opposition to the various forms of invasion which assailed France at that time. All those hostile to this invasion were remarkably helped by Madame Adam's profound and vast intelligence as well as by her extraordinary gift of intuition. It seems as though she positively receives messages and warnings through some superconscious channels. For instance she has always *known* for a fact—with her it was a conviction and not merely an opinon, as with her friends in the army—that the Germans, in the next war, would come through Belgium. She never ceased to predict this event to those about her. The back numbers of the "Nouvelle Revue" and the articles of Captain Gilbert will bear out this statement.

Unlike most women who are destined to lead an active career, to undertake important enterprises, Madame Adam is strikingly handsome. Although she never hid this dangerous gift under a bushel, she has known how, thanks to her will and intelligence, to overcome its many and indubitable disadvantages. Although she is a born leader, she has remained wholly feminine and is a perfect housekeeper, as skilful in preparing preserves or menus as in deciphering military or diplomatic secrets. She manages her household with an incomparable "economy," to use the word in its Latin sense, and at the same time with a royal lavishness. She is a born *grande dame.* She knows how to put a boor in his place and how to suppress a bounder with a smiling, yet crushing remark; on the other hand, she also always knows exactly what to say to reward a good deed, or to bring tears of gratitude to the eyes. Nothing straightforward, honest or outspoken ever angers her, but she cannot endure falseness or hypocrisy. She possesses the secret for healing the wounds of the sad, the bashful or the poor. I have known only Alphonse Daudet, and one other person very near to me, who could so efficiently and with such kindness care for those in distress. Her generosity has one curious quality, namely, that no one ever takes advantage of it. Her big-heartedness is contagious. The lowest, vilest being whom she has befriended has never ventured to malign her or resent her goodness.

How it is that Germany, which thinks of almost everything, did not attempt to suppress such an important and powerful enemy? I have never been able to solve this mystery. Our enemies, in spite of the eighty-four million marks they spend annually on their secret service, are generally ill informed as regards psychology. We can now reveal the fact that for years and years Madame Adam kept the Russian government informed of the plots Bismarck organized against it. Twice she travelled to Saint Petersburg to communicate, to those whose interests were at stake, information that could not be trusted to intermediaries. Her enduring hatred for Count Witte, who attempted to bring about a Russo-German reconciliation, was based on ample information. The death of her friend, General Skobeleff, was a great blow to her but she at once set about finding someone to take the place of this great francophile and anti-German influence. Here we see a characteristic trait of Madame Adam's nature. She never loses courage, she always keeps up her hopes. As she says, "There's always some piece of luck waiting just round the corner, and if there isn't . . . why you can always pray." Even in the days when she wrote "Païenne" and before the mystic ascension of her other volume "Chrétienne," Madame Adam worshipped Jeanne d'Arc, "who never lost hope, even when the fortunes of France were at their lowest ebb." Daughter of stalwart Picard forbears, descendant of a race of laughing, drinking, much-enduring country folk, this extraordinary woman has the soul of a true crusader. For half a century she has led a crusade within the confines of her own country. But I believe, and I am in position to know, she did something more than that. I am convinced that Madame Adam contributed spiritually to our victory on the Marne in 1914, that modern Poitiers, when not only the Teuton but everything he stands for was defeated forever. It was her faith, and the faith in ultimate victory which she had inspired in others during the long, dreary years between, that floated over those seven days of battle.

But let us mention a quite different side of Madame Adam's life. I remember one particular evening, it was in 1893, at No. 190, boulevard Malesherbes, a house where history has been made. Around Madame Adam's flower-covered dinner-table were gathered His Highness the Duc d'Aumale,[1] Charles de Freycinet, member of the Academy and prominent statesman, Alphonse Daudet, Magnard, at that time editor of the "Figaro," Calmette, who succeeded him, General Galliffet, and some twenty other guests. Never have I drunk such good Bordeaux—it was a Château-Laffitte—nor one that had been more wisely *chambré*. When this wine, one of the noblest of them all, attains such a degree of perfection it reminds one of a rose blooming at nightfall. All its implicit beauties become apparent. The Burgundy was no way inferior, for it was a Chambertin, all fire and violets, and as for the Champagne . . . but I will not go on, lest my readers become too thirsty. The food was as delicious as the wines. Truffles were in season and they lent their perfume to fowls as infinitely suave as though larded with their own golden fat. My father led the Duc d'Aumale to describe the trial of Marshal Bazaine. He did so with the simplicity of the true soldier. Freycinet, also, was most interesting, in spite of his high voice, which was like that of a convalescent trying to talk fast. On the other hand, Galliffet, who distinguished himself at Sedan and was Minister of War in 1901, with his hollow cheeks, brick-red complexion, and deliberately coarse manner of speaking, produced an unfavorable impression. With her customary tact Madame Adam kept the conversation general among the guests, avoiding topics which might prove too exciting.

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[1] Fourth son of Louis Philippe. He defeated Abd-el-Kadr in the Algerian campaign of 1843. (Translator's note.)

That great novelist, Henry James, used to say "your dinner parties in France always resemble the sessions of the Revolutionary Convention." This is perfectly true. We gesticulate, we interrupt one another, we reply to several people at the same time. All this is because we eat real cooking and drink wine, whereas English food, half tasteless, half over-spiced, stimulates the palate rather than the mind. Pickles are a heresy. On this particular evening the subject of the Commune suddenly cropped up. It was a dangerous one, and Madame Adam sought, unsuccessfully, to eliminate it. Galliffet spoke so brutally about the poor devils who had participated in the movement that my father first contradicted him and then began to lose his temper. Things looked stormy for a moment. Fortunately the Duc d'Aumale began a story about an experience he had had in Algeria and things calmed down. Magnard, who sat next to me, murmured, "These events took place twenty years ago, and yet they are as irritating as though they had happened yesterday. Only death can quiet human passions . . . and not always that." "Very true," agreed Calmette, always a lover of peace and conciliation, and whom death was to silence all too soon himself.

It is in the country, on her estate at Gif, that you should see our dear lady. She lives on the grounds of a former abbey whose ruins she has respected while erecting near by a comfortable modern house with a huge studio and a terrace overlooking the valley. On a summer's day there alight at the station a couple of dozen Parisians of both sexes, some of whom like each other, some of whom do the reverse, in Paris. Here hardly have the carriages taken them to the house when the hostess's cordiality has fused them all into one agreeable, amicable whole. If Madame Adam told me to, I would be willing to play ten-pins with Jean Aicard, the most despicable, dullest, vainest of all poets who cannot write poetry. I would even read from one end to the other an article by Ernest Judet, former editor of "L'Éclair." On the terrace at Gif I have bowled with Jules Claretie whom I had repeatedly attacked in connection with the Dreyfus case, and we parted on good terms. Unfortunately, a couple of years later when a play by the Jewish deserter, Bernstein, was suppressed following the uproar instigated by the "Action Française," we again fell out and I was first obliged to go "bang, bang," with a pistol and then stand up and fence with his son, Georges Claretie. The latter was almost killed. Life brings such surprises. . . .

Another of Madame Adam's guests was Paul Bourget, master-builder of novels. It was at Gif that, taking me affectionately by the arm, he gave me unforgettable lessons in our art. Bourget is one of those rare beings who know how to communicate to others the fruit of their experience. His grave, watchful face, his sometimes sombre, smouldering glance behind his monocle, lights up when he grasps some fundamental idea, some sequence of causes, when he feels he has at last seized the truth. Bourget's broad intelligence is never overhasty in arriving at conclusions. He is as patient and as obstinate as time, whose injuries he has managed to avoid, his mind and appearance both remaining surprisingly youthful. A born psychologist, he has developed this gift by his choice of friends and he is unequalled in the art of classification and definition. He readily admits the influence that the science of medicine and association with doctors have had on him; indeed, he is prone to exaggerate the value of certain practitioners and research workers. His conversation is delightful, it is so accurate, so varied, so well suited to the person to whom he happens to be speaking. He goes out little, he thinks a great deal; extremely cultured, he judges everything in a personal and consistent manner. I always regret it when the time comes to bid him good-bye. The stupidity of fools in general saddens him, because there is nothing to be done about it. But the stupid remarks of intelligent people, and especially of his fellow-authors, amuse him no end. It is a marvellous moment when he consents to quote them, to make them sparkle before an appreciative audience, as a jeweler might display his choicest treasures.

Bourget possesses a characteristic common to all great novelists, namely, the sense of how to develop his theme. Once he has established his characters and presented them, their conduct appears altogether logical. Indeed I believe it is they themselves, not the author, who dictate their political and religious reactions. Bourget is too absolutely honest, he is too great a lover of truth ever to seek to distort it. At a time when, under the evil influence of Zola, a portion of French fiction was given over to the delineation of animal instincts (not to be confused with the instincts of the human animal), Bourget took the opposite turning and championed the power of the mind over the body.

According to Bourget two laws govern the art of the novelist. One of them is credibility, the other the sense of time, or "perspective." The story the author tells the reader must be presented so as to appear possible. "You'd think it actually happened!" That is the real compliment for an author, a writer's best reward. When all artificial props are withdrawn, his work must seem to be a spontaneous creation. Dickens and Alphonse Daudet both possessed the gift of credibility. In Balzac it is interrupted by the constant intrusions and commentaries of the genius himself, always anxious to remind his audience of the existence of Honoré de Balzac, as if the engineer of a train should put his head out of the window to chat with the passengers. Balzac does not suggest, he tells you everything, he explains everything, he is intoxicated with his abiltiy to bring together fragments of the universe and pieces of souls. In this he differs from Shakespeare, who leaves his personages to explain themselves and does not interpolate bits of his own experiences into the story of their lives. The latter method is the one Bourget prefers.

The question of time, or "perspective," is not less important. The development of a novel must convey the impression of actual time, now rushing past at full speed like a locomotive, now dragging itself along like a sick tortoise. Poor Édouard Rod never understood this, nor did Cherbuliez; that is why their work is so lifeless, so feeble. Balzac was a master of this phase of the author's craft. One feels the eternity of love in the park of Clochegurde or in the night that Montauran spends with Marie de Verneuil; one lives through an entire period in "Le Cabinet des Antiques," or in the siege of old Rouget by Philippe Bridau. It is a magic gift to know how to reverse the hour-glass at just the right moment, or how to dispense with it altogether when it is worn out and the grains pass through it too slow or too fast. No handbook on literature contains the laws which are the basis of Bourget's work. For only a novelist can properly talk of other novelists. How can a wooden-head like Brunetière, who measures by square feet, understand that delightful mystery, the production of life itself by means of pen, fresh ink, paper, and a brain? Paul Bourget is to me the supreme example of human intellectual curiosity. He is all eyes and ears. As a matter of fact, he is careful to avoid "Cuvierism," the reconstruction of an entire skeleton out of a single bone. He knows that nine times out of ten such a guess will be wrong. Nor does he indulge in "Claude Bernardism," that is, going fishing, if one happens to be a clever fisherman, after any kind of a theory and then marvelling at what a wonderful theory you have caught. He knows there are many fishes not worth catching, many paths that lead nowhere. He makes his choice deliberately, ever faithful to his love of natural hierarchy. Go for a walk with him. All at once he will suddenly break off, in the midst of a serious discussion, to point out the curious appearance of some passer-by or the spectacle of a child at play. His two intellectual currents, the inner current of reflection and the outer current of observation, complete one another and yet flow independently.

CHAPTER XV

My Visits to England—Henry James, the Bourget of English Letters—Life in England—Henry Stanley—George Meredith—Other Visits Abroad.

I MADE frequent visits to England between 1885 and 1900, the most important being the one in the Spring of 1895, when I accompanied Alphonse Daudet. My mother has recorded the principal episodes of this visit in a delightful little volume to which I must refer the reader. The weather was glorious, cheerful, and bright. The enormous city of labour and luxury seemed bathed in a golden mist. We lodged in Dover street, in the heart of Piccadilly, but every day Henry James would come and take us out somewhere for a walk, sometimes to a tea or a luncheon, or to dinner at a club.

Henry James, the Bourget of Anglo-Saxon literature, if one makes allowance for all the racial and psychological differences, was by birth an American. He was the brother of William James, the philosopher, the inventor of pragmatism. His was a noble and well-rounded personality, for he possessed a marvellously clear general intelligence besides being a novelist, dramatist, and critic of the first rank. His plays did not succeed in England, where an immature public is contented with spectacular productions and sentimental little comedies. On the other hand, his novels and essays were widely read and admired. He was what Nietzsche has called "a good European," in other words, a citizen of Europe in general, not of any one country in particular. His range of knowledge was very wide, his taste in everything excellent and correct. Moreover, he had a gift of ironic benevolence which allowed him to be amused at a person's faults and at the same time excuse them. His physical appearance, suggesting that of a doctor or a lawyer, inspired confidence; Alphonse Daudet was very fond of him.

One day Daudet happened to exclaim, "How proud the English soldiers look! how straight they hold themselves as they walk along with their swagger sticks!"

Henry James replied, holding his hand in front of him, and speaking in that deliberate manner of his, "My dear Daudet, they couldn't do otherwise. Remember, there's a young and pretty servant girl watching them behind every window."

I asked him once, "How does it happen, dear Monsieur James, that the English, when they drink wine at home (very good wine it is too), serve it in liqueur glasses and at the end of the meal?"

He replied, laughing, "Dear Monsieur Léon, this ancient custom is, fortunately, by no means universal. You have, so far, only encountered hosts who employ the rites of old-fashioned lovers of wine, terribly old fashioned at that."

Thus we amused ourselves, noticing the fundamental differences between the English and French temperaments, the French and English ways of living. Georges Hugo, who accompanied us on this trip, was a great admirer of England and declared its ways in everything correct. James gently set him right: "Dear Monsieur Georges, everything is not perfect in this ancient, agreeable, and contradictory civilization. No, certainly everything is not perfect, but I am glad to see you enjoy the little morning meal with its numerous and simple delights." He referred to the fresh fish, ham, eggs, and jam with which the Englishman ballasts himself before he sets out to work. The work itself, however, is not so extremely heavy. In business circles you arrive at the office at about ten and knock off at one. Between four and six the sacrosanct tea is served. Ample time is allowed for physical exercise and social duties. The latter are taken more seriously than with us. Beneath their cold and reserved exterior, which is a form of mental comfortableness, our neighbours hide a sort of frenzy for society. Going out constantly for a month at the height of the London season, I met every night, at thirty different houses, the same fifty people always delighted to be together again. What delicate, charming faces one encountered among these daughters of Shakespeare and Dickens, Thackeray and Meredith! Who was the fool who said that English women had large feet? They have the prettiest, most daintily arched, most exquisite feet in the world. Also they know how to show them to advantage.

The delicious Madame Palmer, who has since died, displayed at these gatherings her transparent fluid beauty, like that of the figures in Burne-Jones' pictures. Her eyes were the colour of aquamarine and she had an expression of angelic goodness. She and her companions were like flowers bathed in morning dew; they had a freshness peculiar to young English girls and women. Their language, like the song of a bird, is perfectly fitted to their finely curved lips. As you look and listen it is easy to understand that wingèd race of singers who, during the two great literary reigns of Victoria and Elizabeth, celebrated in their verse the body and soul of womanhood. As you watch you understand the excessive elegance, the clinging-vinelike slenderness of the heroines of Shelley, Tennyson, and Browning. All seem sisters of those light-footed deer grazing in the park of Windsor. These delightful persons are frequently terribly well informed. They eagerly discuss with you Flaubert, Maupassant, Verlaine, and Hanotaux, the works of Monsieur de Broglie, or those of the Marquis de Ségur, the court of Louis Philippe or that of Napoleon III. But it is more agreeable to enjoy the music of their voices, to follow the charming gestures with which they readjust a bracelet, a shawl or a glove, to await the return of a peal of merriment, as spontaneous as that of a child, where you hear tinkle, like little bells, the joy of physical good-health, the pleasure of breathing, the delight of having a marvellous complexion or of simply being alive.

At the dinners at the Reform Club and the Athenæum, one missed the feminine element. Nothing is gloomier or uglier than a gathering of men. It is like a foretaste of Purgatory. Yet on those occasions important and interesting people attended, anxious to express their admiration for Alphonse Daudet. Among them I remember Arthur Balfour, long, thin, and clever, and just then at the height of his philosophical-political celebrity. A volume he had just brought out was being widely discussed. There, too, was his friend and adversary, John Morley, with his sarcastic mouth, piercing glance, and quick repartee; and charming Admiral Maxse, who prattled away and was forever trying to have us attend the inauguration of some new swimming baths (they happened to be the fad in London that season). Then there was Alma-Tadema, the painter of a very conventional antiquity, as big and red as a figure out of a Franz Hals' picture; Burne-Jones, discreet, elliptic, and speaking in indirect metaphysical allusions, reminiscent of the conversation of Puvis de Chavannes or Mallarmé; old, old, very old, Hamilton Aïdé, whose age was generously put at eighty-five, still playing the 1830 fop, such as one sees in old prints and engravings, who murmured incomprehensible gossip in corners about this or that guest, whom he pointed out with a skeletonlike finger.

Borthwick, since Lord Gleanesk, the owner of the "Morning Post," confided to me in a brusque and decided voice, "In London clubs, even in the best of them, the food is very much poorer than in those little restaurants in the Strand where one can lunch for a couple of shillings and have a perfect fish and a steak and kidney pie. Do you like steak and kidney?" I assured him that this dish appeared to me the masterpiece of the somewhat limited range of English cooking. "Well, then, to-morrow I'll take you where you can get one and you tell me what you think of it."

How Borthwick, already in those days, detested the Germans! Once, when we were having supper at his house, we noticed a group of four of them gorging themselves and dirtying the tablecloth. Borthwick eyed them with disgust and disdain. He summed matters up . . . "sixty million swine."

Robert Sherard is a generous-hearted and able English journalist for whom my father took a great liking. In those days he looked like a blond, youthful Napoleon, but he was always discontented with everything. He said of Hamilton Aïdé, "The old chap would be better off in bed." His comment on a violinist who was trying to add a little pleasure to a reception was, "He doesn't know how to use his instrument," and on Stanley, "I don't like killing people, not even niggers." We were obliged to try and keep his spirits up and banish his perpetual pessimism. Occasionally he would laugh, himself, at his own excessive severity.

I do not know if it was true, as Sherard declared, that Stanley did kill negroes too readily but I do know that he impressed me as being a great man. Short, with a coppery complexion, solid jaw, cheekbones, and forehead, he had a swift, sharp glance. When his French failed him he dropped into Spanish or English. You felt that the famous explorer possessed that authority, the power of commanding men, which stamps the born leader. He accompanied his brief anecdotes with peremptory gestures of his small hands. The enthusiastic admiration of Alphonse Daudet was obviously agreeable to him and he replied painstakingly to all the questions the latter put to him. He told us of a dinner given in honour of Dulong, who later perished miserably at the North Pole in the wreck of the "Jeannette." "At the end of the dinner I stood up and said: take care Monsieur Dulong, if you lose yourself Monsieur Gordon Bennett will send me to look for you." Stanley chopped off his words as though he were hacking his way through the brush.

Stanley was the son-in-law of Mrs. Tennant, a remarkable woman whom Flaubert mentions in his memoirs. He lived at ease and surrounded by affectionate care in a charming house on Richmond Terrace filled with the trophies of his travels. He was like a lion in repose, a most polite lion who stifled his yawns and only occasionally, in a rapid smile, showed his teeth. He kept on the best of terms with those who had accompanied him on his expeditions, among them Jeffson, while his former companions had, in his presence, the attitude of soldiers speaking to their commanding officer. I can still remember how he received us, with the simplicity, the graciousness of a nobleman, opening the glass cases of his African museum, every object in which reminded him of some adventure. "This little rifle-revolver I made myself . . . very handy in case of a battle." This conqueror of strange lands was interested in literature. He read a great deal, and wrote, besides accounts of his travels, memoirs which are extremely interesting. Stanley had solved all the problems of primitive man. He had conquered water, fire, and poison, and one felt that, now, it was the problem of civilization which interested him the most. Huret believed he noticed a ferocious gleam in Stanley's eye. I replied: "That is a preconceived notion. You've come to London with the idea that Stanley must be ferociously blood-thirsty, because you are an absurd humanitarian. If he cut his nails in front of you, you'd fancy he looked as though he were cutting off heads." We argued the point with loud voices and with many gestures in Saint James's street, to the astonishment of the passers-by, and Georges Hugo silenced us by saying: "How French you both are!"

It is difficult to imagine a more complete contrast than that between Henry Stanley and George Meredith, author of "The Egoist" and twenty other masterpieces, a conqueror of the inner world as Stanley was of the outer one. Not only did I know Meredith well, but I loved him dearly on account of his sympathetic understanding of every variety of human nature. The man was like his work; like it he descended further, although by a different stairway, than even Shakespeare or Balzac into the most secret recesses of the mind, feelings, and will of the reasoning biped. A student of the formation of the soul, he inaugurated and perfected a form of novel which will not be largely imitated. To write it one must have remarkable gifts of intuition and of disassociation, one must wield the double lightning bolt and possess the science of a theologian who is, at the same time, a skilled anatomist.

To those unacquainted with Meredith's writings I may say that while they are narratives, they at the same time explain the incidents they relate. Meredith is a lyric analyst whose work gains in depth by its limited scope. He does not place his heroines in startling situations but he brings out the exceptional qualities to be found in the most banal incident of their daily lives. In a way, Meredith makes his characters explain themselves, as, for instance, when Willoughby's fundamental egoism appears in the slightest remarks he makes to the women who, in succession, become the victims of his self-centered, air-tight personality. The spaces the novelist leaves between the lines of his most celebrated novels, and especially in his last, the most complicated of them all, entitled "The Amazing Marriage," are as important as what he puts down in print. He excels in the art of fixing the most fugitive impression, of making a character explain itself by a pause, a single phrase, a trick of speech or gesture. When one has grasped his style and his point of view on people and things—for they go together—other writers and psychologists seem rudimentary and awkward. He has the elliptic faculty of a Pascal and the ruthlessness of a Saint-Simon. Moreover, his characters are living creatures; they are flushed after racing in the garden or making sentimental speeches, talkative after drinking fine old wine, bitter through repressed homesickness; they are creatures who are playful and crafty, who belong both in the open air and within four walls, who possess an unconscious cruelty. Quick to perceive initial leanings towards good or ill, to note the little mannerisms which grow into habits and lead one astray, Meredith unties the tightly wound threads of fate with a cunning hand. He becomes the Æschylus of the accessory, the Molière of the accidental, knowing that accessory or incident contains and conceals the essential factor in the equation. His brilliant insight is like a prism, decomposing an object brought before it and recomposing it an instant later. He now reveals, now hides the secrets of his characters with a supreme elegance of gesture.

Meredith was handsome. His was a strange, high-strung, almost painful form of beauty, the result of sorrow and thought. With his long, white, curling hair, high, white forehead, pointed, white eyebrows, eyes of azure blue sparkling with an ever-kindling flame, his deep, strong voice, nervous hands, and legs that suffered from ataxia, he seemed like a modern sorcerer, a Celtic Mephistopheles. He lived alone in the country, at Boxhill near Dorking, with his books and his thoughts. Hospitable and benevolent, he was also as sarcastic and generous as some king's son might have been. His blood was evidently of some very rare strain; a mixture of many rich elements was necessary to create this lofty character, this eagle of concrete thought. On the table beside him were the poems of Mistral. Speaking of them he said: "They bring me the waves and songs from the Islands of the Blest. Mistral is the greatest of them all, the most ethereal, and yet how firmly balanced he is!" Thus Meredith praised the genius of the Mediterranean, laying his fingers on "Mireille" and "Calendal" as he did so. He read the poems in the original, having learned Provençal for that purpose. Alphonse Daudet explained to him certain turns of phrase he did not altogether understand. "I live here in the midst of Scythians. You understand, don't you, Daudet? You must excuse me." He received my father as he would an old friend. "Let me tell you how fond of you I am. For ten years I've been keeping for you some bottles of the wine of the Côtes-Rôties." His servant, whom he described as "incomparable," brought them up from the cellar. They were indeed remarkable, but Meredith's commentary surpassed them in colour and richness. This was the way we became acquainted, talking about wine.

I have a touching letter from Meredith. It was intended to console me during a long and painful convalescence after typhoid. In it he presents a eulogy of convalescence and recommends it as being a state of special lucidity. I have also a two-hundred-word telegram from him sent me on the occasion of my second marriage, for he knew my wife and was aware of the affection we both felt for him. These papers are very precious relics. The very thought of him makes me feel the presence of greatness. I hear the sound of those Roman trumpets De Quincey speaks of, announcing the approach of royalty. Ah, why can I not turn back to twenty years ago and return to Boxhill and see again this Master of Masters in the flesh?

Meredith was a tease, and his mode of teasing was entirely his own. Admiral Maxse told my father and Meredith, who suffered from the same illness, that he too, after a sprain, had had difficulty for many months in walking about. "Oh, I remember," said Meredith, "just think, this sprain of mine swelled till it was the size of a child's head, and then to that of a grown person with water on the brain. It became an object of curiosity. People used to come from all around the neighbourhood to look at it and feel it." As he spoke, he burst out into joyous and terrifying laughter, while poor Maxse did not dare to contradict this inventor of outrageous exaggerations.

As Meredith had always been proud of his physical strength, he amused himself, when he was melancholy, by throwing enormously heavy weights into the air. He disliked being pitied for his chronic illness, and always spoke of it as something that had taken place the day before or at least very recently. "You have been a doctor, my dear Léon Daudet. That means you don't understand a bit about what people feel who are in pain. Ah, you don't even listen to them any more! It's better it should be like that. It encourages the invalid if the doctor never pays any attention to his complaints. I have some friends,—that's so, isn't it, Maxse—who were cured by just such treatment."

While we were in London, Meredith made the effort to come from Boxhill to dine and spend the evening with us. A large number of his admirers responded to the invitations sent out by my father and Henry James and took advantage of the occasion to present their respects. Although the novelist, on account of his style did not, during his lifetime, ever become tremendously popular, yet he enjoyed the highest form of success, namely the admiration of the chosen few. I cannot find words to express the beauty, the elegance of this wise, animated sage, his brow crowned with the laurels of genius, as he received homage and thanked his admirers with a smile. Civilization attains its highest expression on such occasions, when female beauty surrounds and salutes subtle creative intelligence. The reception became a discreet apotheosis which seemed to please the great man.

It will be the same with Meredith as it was with Stendhal. Fifty years from now his so-called obscurities, really nothing but double ellipses, will have ceased to be obscure. His characters will have taken on the effulgence of masterpieces. His "The Tragic Comedians," "The Egoist," "The Amazing Marriage," "Diana of the Crossways," will have evoked a host of commentaries. Their author will be recognized as the Rembrandt of the written word, as one of those writers who have revealed mankind to man.

People who declare that the novel has become a thing of the past are wrong. Neither vice, nor virtue, nor the sensation of surprise before the spectacle of our brief earthly existence are things of the past. That never resting grey-matter, as Meredith used to call the brain, will always feel the need of registering its emotions, of mirroring itself, or establishing comparisons. Without wishing to pose as a prophet I state confidently that the novel has still to undergo a process of evolution as the characters become simpler, more statuesque, and their creators discover how closely the roots of destiny are bound up with nerves and blood, and analyze more exhaustively impulses and dreams. When that day comes Balzac will seem elementary. So too will Stendhal. But an enduring statue to George Meredith will be erected. England will be as proud of him as she is now of Shakespeare. Rightly so, since he marks the extreme limit of prose—by prose I mean the science of analysis of our mental and moral activities—as Shakespeare marks the limit of overwhelming, swift poetry.

To understand London, you must know English literature, you must have read and re-read the Elizabethan dramatists, Shakespeare, Ford, Webster, Cyril Tourneur, the works of Thomas de Quincey, Dickens, Stevenson, Hardy and Meredith. How many times have I stood for a long while at some crossing of the Strand, at some crowded spot where the foot-passengers slip by like a muddy stream! Here come the comrades of Shakespeare; they bait him with absurd queries, to which he always finds an apt reply. He piles up witticisms and metaphors (according to contemporary accounts, he was as talkative and full of quaint humour as one of his own minor characters). Here comes the murderer Sikes. He has just slain Nancy; he is followed by the dog which so upset him. Here is Long John Silver with his limp; that terrible dual-being, Jekyll-Hyde; here are Florence and the little cripple from "Dombey and Son"; and all the other characters, enough to fill a section of this great city. It is a summer evening. Twilight approaches stealthily, powdered with rose and warm bronze tints, making all the men and women look like masterpieces of Reynolds and Hogarth. The swarm of new impressions brings with it an all-comprehensive understanding. I could linger hours, days, months even, like a Stylite, with Memory at my right and Insight at my left, did not my appetite make itself heard, did I not at the same time dream of a fine slice of rare roast beef in a dish of steamed potatoes, the whole washed down by an honest claret.

The deep green of the English countryside creates a homesickness in sailors and other wanderers generally. But take a train at St. Pancras, go up to Edinburgh, Glasgow, and beyond, and enjoy the contrast between the Lake Country and the mining districts. Not that it is a particularly attractive experience, especially if you are alone, to watch the oblique lines of rain cut ruthlessly across the landscape like the lines on the pages of a child's copy-book. Nor is it particularly cheerful when, by the bridge across the Clyde, at the inn your driver recommends, you find nothing to eat but ham and eggs and the only potable an unpleasant whisky and soda. . . . And yet this melancholy, this moisture, this intense green fringed with black and ochre, provokes a delightful mental state, a sort of waltz of intensely active midges of the mind. It comes from contact with a country rather than with its inhabitants. It is Spinoza's *natura naturata* reacting on the *natura naturans*. Travel is only a pretext for metempsychosis.

* * *

It was in 1895 that Georges Hugo, my brother Lucien, and myself, our enthusiasm aroused by a winter in Holland, decided to push on as far as Elsinore, in order to see whether the ice, the ghosts, and the wind were of as good a quality there as at Amsterdam and Haarlem. I should mention that we had crossed the Zuyder Zee at sunset in a sleigh and the fairy-like vision had gone to our heads. We decided, therefore, to execute this meteoric northern raid on the spot. A telegram to our various families evoked the following surprising answer: "Impossible Elsinore. Too cold, too far, too worried." How we enjoyed our disobedience! We have none of us forgotten the station at Osnabrück, as we saw it at three in the morning, wrapped in its white shroud, nor the "Harmonica" waiting to take us to Hamburg. Why this express train should have been called the "Harmonica," I never knew. Old Hamburg in the snow reminded us of the etchings of Whistler, Hokusai, and Rembrandt, all at the same time. I was the only one who spoke German. My companions kept teasing me. "Tell him to bring another bottle. . . . Tell him to have the potatoes warmed over . . . and have him send the Apollinaris up to our rooms." Sometimes a simple word would slip my mind and then both would exclaim together: "Too bad! And to think he's been studying for fifteen years!" After

Hamburg, Copenhagen and its "*langelinie*" seemed to us rather tame. Denmark is nothing but an immense carpet of snow marked here and there with strange tracks—the tails of foxes, the feet of ravens—like an illustration to good old La Fontaine. On the other hand the crossing of the Belts in an ice-cutter boat and the sight of Elsinore gave us exactly the super-intense thrill to which we had been looking forward ever since Amsterdam. Night was falling, though it was about three o'clock in the afternoon. The legendary castle with its famous terrace rose from a low-hanging, poisonous, silver mist. An alley of trees covered with hoar-frost bordered the water which reflected them dimly. You might seek in vain for traces of Ophelia's little feet, of the solid stumps of Polonius, or the footprints of the Prince of Denmark, yet everything remained just as it was at the moment of the fatal duel, where poison completed the work of cold steel. You seemed to hear in the stuffy air, the distant trumpets of Fortinbras. It was from this atmosphere of tangible day-dream that my book "Le Voyage de Shakespeare" was born. There, too, I understood that the dramatist had certainly *seen* Elsimore, whether with the eyes of the body or with those of the mind. When we arrived at Körsör, night was coming on, heavy and tragic, like forgetfulness, death, or disloyalty.

"Now then," exclaimed Georges, "on to Stockholm!"

What wretches we were! Entirely forgotten was the banquet in honour of Monsieur de Goncourt, which had been postponed on account of the death of Vacquerie, and which it would have been a crime for us to miss, since we loved and admired, with all our hearts, the author of "Germinie Lacerteux" and "La Faustine." Another telegram from home reminded us of the obligation. At the same time the Director of the Postal and Telegraph Services of the German Empire informed us that a fairly large sum, on which we depended, was "hung up" at Hamburg. Consequently we had only forty-eight hours to spend on Stockholm, including its environs, our amiable plenipotentiary Monsieur Rouvier, and the delightful Swedish historian, Heidenstamm. This short period was well spent. We took in a visit to Drottingholm in a snow storm, an excursion in a sleigh, walks about the city, a dinner, and a reception. Eighty-four hours later, in the style of Jules Verne's heroes, shaved and in full evening dress, we entered the Grand Hotel in Paris where four or five hundred people "of the best society," as they say in London, had gathered to acclaim the dear god-father of my younger sister.

What a happy god-father he was too! He beamed on everybody, on Ajalbert, on Geffroy, on Rosny, on Mirbeau, on Georges, on Lucien. Our record journey didn't interest him in the least. My father, instead of making a formal speech, said a few tenderly affectionate words to "my old comrade, so good to me in times of stress," and all the listeners felt a catch in their throats, a tear in their eyes. The address by Raymond Poincaré was excellent; that of Georges Clemenceau was less so, though he meant well enough. Just then he had bidden a temporary farewell to the pomps and vanities of political life and was at work on his book "Les Plus Forts." He felt the necessity of making it perfectly clear that he was a fellow-author, "one of the crowd," that he knew his classics and was familiar with the arts of drama and fiction. But the important thing was that Goncourt should be pleased, and so he was, for he pressed his trembling cheek against the hard cheek bones of Clemenceau. After it was over, the thirst was general, and I suggested to half-a-dozen of my friends that we try some semi-dry champagne, not iced but cooled. The suggestion was accepted with enthusiasm. Goncourt has since admitted how much he would have enjoyed joining us, but he feared the presence of an old gentleman would have spoiled the party. I will never forgive myself for not having dared invite him. His ripe old age was never that of a man who interferes with others' pleasures.

CHAPTER XVI

Madame de Loynes and Her Circle—A Famous Parisian Salon—Maurice Donnay—Lucien Guitry—Boni de Castellane—Jules Lemaître.

THE salon of Madame de Loynes, 152, avenue des Champs Élysées, was certainly the most important and active rallying point of the forces which organized the Nationalist Movement during the gloomy years preceding the Great War. Here Jules Lemaître had his headquarters, and from here were dispatched those messages and orders about which I will tell you some day when we can write more freely.[1] To-day I wish merely to describe what came of the encounter of two clear minds and firm wills devoted to the interests of France. Having had the privilege of being the intimate friend of both Madame de Loynes and Jules Lemaître, and being fond of both, I can, now that they are dead, write and speak of them with a freedom which would previously have offended their extreme modesty.

In her youth Madame de Loynes' delicate beauty was well-nigh perfect, as is shown by the portrait, painted by Amaury Duval, which Lemaître bequeathed to the Louvre. She was of middle height, graceful, with harmonious features, and, at the time I speak of, had soft grey-golden hair. Her eyes, usually of a penetrating melancholy, kindled at times with a flash of humour and her voice was grave and tender, like that of Cordelia in the play. When you called you found her sitting on a big rose-colored cushion dating from the Second Empire, wearing a quilted gown, a fan in her hand and surrounded by her favourite lap-dogs. Gracious in manner, she would say, "Sit down, my friend," offering her soft, delicate, elongated hand, and fixing her caller with her clear glance. Thus she charmed and conquered at once. Later the victim was completely subjugated, and might well be, for never have I known a more devoted or loyal friend. I used to say to her, "You're worth ten men." "Just listen to Léon," she would reply, "how he throws things at you, Bang, like that! Do you agree with him, Monsieur Lemaître?"

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[1] This section of Daudet's Memoirs was published in 1914-1915 under the Censorship Laws. (Translator's note.)

"Léon *seems* to exaggerate, Madame, but really he is right. At any rate, you are quite worth ten men of my calibre."

How we laughed on such occasions! When Madame de Loynes was really amused—and she was often amused—she had a trick of tapping the bottom of her dress with her fan, then lifting her arms in the air as though overcome with fright. Whereupon all the tiny dogs would bark like fury. She had as much native wit, and could be as tigerish in her remarks, as a Sévigné, a Lespinasse, or a Geoffrin. She had a droll gift of repartee, and in conversation used remarkably effective metaphors as well as unexpected epigrams and extremely accurate definitions. A certain Jew, connected in some vague way with the stage, said one day when she was present, "In case of war I would dash for the frontier." "Which frontier would it be?" inquired Madame de Loynes, gently.

A hundred similar sayings of hers were constantly being quoted. Yet her greatest distinction, the secret of her art, lay in the fact that she was a wise counsellor, and an infinitely understanding listener. She knew how to handle the most vehement conversation, the most heated discussion with perfect tact, indicating by a significant silence or a phrase the possible *faux-pas*. She would silence a bore by a laughing question to his neighbour. But what most upset her was the bedlam of a Parisian dinner-table. She would impose silence by saying, "Please, Monsieur So-and-So, let us hear what our friend, Monsieur Lemaître, has to say," or it might be "our friend Houssaye," or "our friend Capus." She would not allow the gold or silver of good conversation, grave or gay, to slip down and roll about the floor. She knew how to encourage the bashful and how to silence the bold.

Madame de Loynes was at home every evening from five to seven, gave dinner parties on Fridays and Sundays, and occasionally at other times to particularly intimate friends. But she would receive you alone if you asked for an appointment. Her hospitality was simple but generous, never unduly ostentatious but with an abundance of everything. Dinner consisted of a soup, a *relevé,* a fine fish, two roasts or a roast and a piece of game, according to what was in season, vegetables, salad with a *paté,* and a dessert, fruit or ice. The menus were always carefully prepared and occasionally included special provincial dishes or recipes invented by one of the guests. All agreed that her table was the best in Paris, both in quantity and quality. Her fowls were sent specially from Bourg en Bresse, the hams from Luxeuil, and the forcemeat from Lyons. Everything was always of just the right temperature when it came on the table; none of those mysterious delays so maddening to a hostess! A melon not quite ripe, which Coppée at once commented on, remained a scandal which lasted for years. Henry Houssaye had created a dish of ham surrounded by truffles, known as the H. H. I dare not attempt to describe its velvety aroma. My duty was to cut the pineapple according to the proper ritual, then drown it, first in kirsch, then in sugar, then in maraschino. All dishes were passed twice (as is right and proper), and the servants, whom our dear Pauline, an incomparable major-domo, kept in hand, were strictly forbidden to hurry the service. Each guest had at his place a glass for ordinary wine, intended to be freely consumed, besides a glass for Burgundy, a glass for Bordeaux, and a *coupe* for the Champagne. The cellar was as good as the table, though the latter frequently attained the sublime. Ali Bab, whose real name is Henri Babinski, the immortal author of "La Gastronomie Pratique," declares that a properly balanced meal never impedes the digestion. This fundamental law was proved at Madame de Loynes' dinners. Though everyone ate too much, no one ever became drowsy or cross, as so frequently happens after the poisonous banquets of the rich. Occasionally, indeed, after a number of glasses of Champagne, the light head of Henry Houssaye would spin round a bit, but the surrounding good-fellowship dealt kindly with his outbreaks. The great Academic baby was permitted to do as he pleased. He was an expert on Napoleonic strategy, though he never commanded a squad, and was the most peaceable of human beings. His book, "Waterloo," is a good piece of work that stands the test of time.

Alfred Capus and Maurice Donnay, both novelists and playwrights, can, either of them, keep a dinner party amused. When both are present it is almost too much of a good thing. Capus comes from Provence and retains a very slight southern accent. His intelligence is exceptionally well balanced, in fact, almost too much so, for he has a positive horror of extreme views on anything, and so sometimes makes the mistake of falling on this side if not on the other. His is the disillusioned satirical philosophy of Montaigne, whom he resembles physically. He believes in the law of compensation, in an equilibrium between annoyances and grief on the one hand, and of pleasures and happiness on the other. A profound observer of human weaknesses, he speaks of them lightly, and treats vices as though they were merely eccentricities. He would never punish anyone, even in fun. Life to Capus is a game against the Unknown, with a capital U, and it behooves us—you, or him, or me—to hold some trumps or else to face the music with indifference. His own indifference extends even to the possibility of his creating a masterpiece. His plays are but the stray blossoms of a mind whose tap-roots burrow deep and far. I prefer his "Qui Perd Gagne" to "Scènes de la Vie de Bohème," although the latter is a good book. This sage has attained success and great popularity, has achieved honours and wealth, as simply as though he had remained totally unknown, poor and unrecognized. He floats along, lying on his back, watching the stars, and says: "This stream should take me somewhere, I suppose."

Academicians were frequently created in the Salon of Madame de Loynes, and Capus knew it. He wanted to belong to the Academy. Nevertheless he remained as free in his manner towards those on whom his election depended as though he himself were not yearning to assume the green, palm-embroidered coat and gird on the Academic sword. It was a delightful sight! The dear fellow throws his money out of the window, if he happens to have any, and is extremely generous towards his friends. He lacks entirely all vanity and pedantry, concealing carefully his very real and well-informed taste for metaphysics and biology. In conversation his repartees are homeric. For instance, at a dinner where we were eighteen, Joseph Reinach called out to him from the other end of the table : "Capus, is it true that you have joined up with the Nationalist party?" Capus answered in level tones, "What things people will say! Do you know, I have actually been told that you are a Jew."

He is eclectic in his acquaintances and allows no one to interfere with his choice. He hates to take sides in a quarrel, or indeed to do anything that interferes with his freedom of movement. Though an attentive botanist, absorbed in the study of Parisian flora, he will suddenly be tempted by an automobile trip to the region around Tours or the resplendent city of Marseilles, where, as he says, "One can eat fish trimmed with sunlight." His imagination keeps him from becoming prosy, but it is a danger which threatens him at times. He recognizes fully the rôle money plays in our social life. He admires the man who dares give a hundred thousand francs to a banker to use for his own purposes and hand back, in exchange, a wad of papers and three thousand francs a year. The statistics of economists, the basic theories of moralists, fail to impress him. He takes pleasure in pointing out how contradictory they are. I assure you that "Capus powder" is an excellent prophylactic against parlor lice and other social vermin. Indeed, it is the very king of insect powders. Dear Capus, you have performed many a good deed with your insecticide. Your golden bellows are as deadly as the vitriol-sprayer of Forain: both are useful.

Maurice Donnay, my cousin, is a poet, sometimes a satirist (when annoyed), and always a pleasure-loving dreamer. He escapes from the boredom of a dinner-party by taking a train when the soup appears and travelling to Constantinople, Persia, and the Indies, and not coming back till the dessert is on the table. This doesn't prevent him from having noted, with the corner of his laughing, brilliant little eye, the *decolleté* of the woman next to him or the mannerism of that man yonder, at the foot of the table. I think he prefers the *decolleté* to the mannerism, but anything inharmonious makes him a little ill. He has the large mouth of a hearty old ogre who knows how to choose his mouthfuls, the exquisite laugh of a happy child, shining teeth, and a slight and entertaining hesitation in his speech. He moves his fingers, constantly, as though he were rolling little bread pills. When someone bores him with stupid talk or when some homely man begins to tell him the story of his life, he looks mournful, very, very, very mournful indeed, as mournful as a man might look who was being operated on by an executioner in some market-place in Africa under the broiling sun. He glances this way and that in search of help. I come to the rescue. I take him firmly by the arm and say, "Come with me, cousin, I've an extremely important matter I must speak to you about at once." But the ungrateful creature has already ceased to listen to me. Hardly has he escaped his tormentor, when already he is off again among his dreams.

Maurice is a character out of Shakespeare, a true Mercutio. If all conditions are just right when he steps out of his aeroplane and finds himself back on solid earth, he will tell you some charming, airy tale that will make you laugh and cry at the same time. But to say he *tells* a story is not quite true. He improvises and simplifies. He, of all people, is afraid that he will bore you—he, the great enchanter! Sometimes, when his cousin is there to lead him on and the atmosphere is warm and affectionate, he consents to sing, in his delightful voice, those old French songs of which he has a limitless collection.

Madame de Loynes was one of those who enjoyed our improvised performances. "Give us a little music, Donnay," she would say.

"But, Madame, without a piano . . ."

"That's all right. Léon will accompany you. Won't you, Léon?"

My accompaniment consisted of going *poum, poum, poum,* and following as closely as possible the perfect rhythm of Maurice. Whenever he forgot his part, I acted as prompter, while Madame de Loynes and Lemaître applauded.

"What actors they are, the rascals! They could make a fortune, doing the round of the salons!"

At Madame de Loynes', dinner was served at exactly seven-thirty. There was no postponement in case one of the guests was late, no matter who it might be. We left the table at nine. After dinner the ladies and the non-smokers gathered around our hostess in the drawing-room, while the smokers sought refuge in the outer hall near the front door. The bell rang and other guests, who had been asked for coffee, came in bringing with them the latest piece of gossip from the *Chambre,* or from the theatrical world, or from Paris in general. To understand properly what was going on behind the scenes, the true meaning, comic or tragic, of the events of the day, it was necessary to go to Madame de Loynes'. There it was that the opinions expressed the following morning by the Nationalist, or even by the simply Parisian newspapers, first took shape. There the guests considered those unforeseeable factors which Bismarck refers to; examined the different sides of a question, and the advantages or disadvantages of such and such a line of conduct. Ruffled tempers were smoothed down—more or less. I say "more or less" because "La Patrie Française" tolerated an anarchy completely foreign to the discipline of the "Action Française." Lemaître, as party leader, lacked the firmness, ubiquity and capacity for prompt decisions that we find in Maurras. He knew it, too, and left the details and sometimes even the major operations to his lieutenants, principally Syveton.

I enjoyed watching the arrivals of new guests, so promptly caught up in the general conversation, in the jokes and questions bandied about in that famous vestibule. People appeared there in their true colours, caught off their guard, in the little flurry of passing from the street to the house, from the foot of the stairs to the landing, among familiar objects.

Madame de Loynes' motto, engraved on her note-paper, was: *Je ne crains que ce que j'aime.*[1] Never have I met another man or woman as naturally brave as she was, as impervious to fear or weariness. Physically as frail and delicate as a flower, dreading draughts, overexertion, meals at irregular hours, quarrels at table and the ill effects of slander, she was prepared to face any danger or run any risk "for the country's good," as she put it. Although belonging by her tastes and habits to the Second Empire, she had learned a lesson from the war of 1870. Indeed, she learned lessons from everything. The passing years only strengthened her skill as an observer, and her political beliefs. She never abandoned a single one of her friends or supporters; she never allowed one of them to be attacked in her presence; she never forgot a service or an insult. Never did she indulge in the malicious pleasure of commenting on the weakness of some useful or devoted henchman, or on the physical appearance of a faithful friend. Jealous in her friendships and passionate in her attachments and hatreds, she sought the advancement of those of whom she was fond, desiring only to see them developing their best qualities to the utmost. The bashful she took by the hand encouragingly, and gently quieted the overbold. If these were too peremptory, she would drop a hint or two, but if this did not suffice she could use firm language. One remarkable trait of her character was her dislike for publicity. She, who for forty years played a leading part in the newspaper world, who entertained time and again all the principal editors and writers of the capital, forbade her name or any detail regarding her house to appear in print. To disobey her wishes in this respect was to incur immediate expulsion from her circle. She was pleased and proud when Lemaître was praised, and became as fierce as a tigress if anyone dared to attack him or slander him, and yet she never tried to get one of his articles accepted, or to obtain any other favour on his behalf.

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[1] "I fear only what I love."

Madame de Loynes had a genius for discovering budding talent. In Paris people are not inclined to step aside for a newcomer. It is more likely that those who have arrived will combine in order to keep them down. With Madame de Loynes such low manœuvres did not go. Lemaître helped her by constantly renewing the elements of a gathering which the age of its members and their long-established habits tended to ossify. My introduction into the circle created a slight scandal. I have always insisted on speaking my mind, even in the presence of a dozen Academicians. I decline to swallow my tongue if anyone attacks those whom I respect or admire. In order to overcome the opposition which she felt on my account, our hostess insisted that I appear at all her Friday-night dinners. She knew that my wife and I both liked her personally, and that I neither wanted nor needed a seat in the Academy, decorations, office, protection, or anything else. The only thing I ever asked this exquisite creature to do for me was to keep in good health and spirits.

I have mentioned that Madame de Loynes received at her house two full generations of writers and statesmen. She remembered with emotion several of the older men, especially Renan, Sainte-Beuve, Flaubert, and Girardin. When these names happened to be mentioned she would utter a faint sigh and her beautiful eyes would cloud with sadness. She seemed to be thinking, "How short was the time they were with us!" Then subtly, discreetly, she would quote one of their brilliant remarks, or tell some flattering anecdote about them. Each and every one of us told her all about our sentimental troubles, our domestic difficulties, our dreams, ambitions, and failures. She possessed a gift which I have never found in anyone else except my father; not only did she inspire an absolute confidence, but she made you feel that you were actually obliged to tell her everything. I fancy that this gift comes from a wealth of sympathy or compassion flowing towards those whom life has wounded, and from the power to recognize such people even among those who have apparently succeeded. In order to share the troubles of others one cannot be rushed or absent-minded. Madame de Loynes was neither. When you came to her with a problem, she at once sought a way to solve it. The wide range and varied character of those who were devoted to her allowed her to use one to help the other, although in certain instances neither was aware of the fact. She would make two opponents both perform the same good action, or bring about an alliance between a blind man and a paralytic. While other people take pleasure in doing harm, Madame de Loynes enjoyed doing good, and in order to achieve her ends she was as flexible as a golden thread, as unyielding as a bar of iron.

One of her intimates, having incurred a disastrous debt, received from her without a request for any sort of receipt, an enormous sum of money. It was Lemaître who told me this along with a hundred other similar stories. When, in 1907, it was suggested we bring out "La Libre Parole," in six pages, and make it a Royalist newspaper, Madame de Loynes at once wanted to contribute 20,000 francs, which I refused. She had her revenge, however, the following year, when in her will she left my wife 100,000 francs. This was promptly used in making the "Action Française" a daily paper. I used to say to her, "You are not like those millionaires who, if a friend of theirs gets into trouble, have to form a committee of ten to find a money-lender who will advance 500 francs." The idea amused her enormously. The ingratitude, the baseness, the vileness of people she had known well, neither disillusioned nor embittered her. Her memory retained with pleasure all noble, generous and disinterested actions. She was capable of distinguishing affectation from sincerity and real danger from sham.

She disdained nobody. She declared, almost in the same words as Maurras: "It never pays to be scornful in politics." Resting her elbow on the arm of the easy chair, her chin in her pretty hand, she listened attentively now to this person, now to that. If you mentioned in her presence something or someone she knew all about, but did not wish to pass judgment on, she had the strength of character to remain silent. Womanly, in the best sense of the word, to the tips of her fingers, she remained a woman at the council board; but it was useless to try to foil her penetration by a compliment. Frequently those who considered themselves superior to her in brains regretted not having followed her advice. Syveton, although inclined to ignore the ladies, as he declared, consulted her and admired greatly her common sense. She always knew how to rise to the occasion, how to confront any difficult situation. Sometimes she uttered a weighty judgment, an epitome of wisdom which one meditated on long afterwards. On the other hand she was not in the least a blue-stocking and made fun of the female "high-brow." "Is it necessary to have read Spinoza, Monsieur Lemaître, in order to make out a laundry list?"

The night of the elections in 1902, which marked a setback for our cause, found us—she, Lemaître, Judet, and I—together at the Café de la Paix. The first returns were being posted one after another and the news was not particularly encouraging. Judet sank further and further into his trousers of military serge; Lemaître became limper and limper, and I angrier and angrier. The illuminated bulletin-boards of the "Écho de Paris," across the street, visible through the window, added to our gloom. It was Madame de Loynes who encouraged us, reminding us that it was not necessary to succeed in order to persevere, as Tacitus puts it, and finally restored our spirits. After dinner I gave her my arm, Lemaître and Judet following us, and brought her, through the steets packed with crowds, to the headquarters of the League, situated in the rue de Grammont. There we found Godefroy, Coppée, Syveton and a host of secretaries engaged in listing the returns from the provinces. What long faces they pulled! I suggested to Madame de Loynes not to prolong this funereal evening, and she took my advice and went home.

She detested Zola and the entire Naturalist school of literature, but from the start was interested in the Théâtre Libre and Antoine. Like the rest of us she admired the latter's genius as a stage-manager.

Lucien Guitry, another great actor, is a very different proposition.[1] He lacks Antoine's profound insight into the art of replacing the real by the fictitious. I have met him three or four times, often enough at any rate to have recognized that he is both clever and lacking in judgment. I mean that he is too easily influenced. Guitry possesses adaptability, ease of manner, an exact imaginative sense of the passion and the action he is portraying. What he lacks is a sufficient knowledge of people and of social and intellectual values. It is sad to think that an artist of his calibre should pass his time in pantomiming—for one cannot say that the dialogue of the oversexed beasts of Bernstein bears any relation to human speech—or in trumpeting the trite, overexaggerated diatribes of Rostand. I believe there is in him, gifted actor that he is, and in spite of the force he puts into his parts, a certain laziness, an indifference, an unwillingness to undertake that effort without which, after one is forty-five, one's talent dissipates itself or falls asleep. Observe him behind the foot-lights, supple in his costume, as sure in his gestures as an old bear who has weathered many a storm, never hurried, always speaking in ordinary tones; little by little he catches fire, grows more intense; then, of a sudden you have the feeling that his rôle (generally badly chosen, as I have just said), is boring him; he makes no attempt to hide the fact but goes on and on, half dormant; and, of course, the audience sleeps with him. The truth of the matter is, that this master tragedian has never found his author. As I write these lines, he is still in search of him. It grieves me to think that fifty years from now, when Guitry, your humble servant, and some others, will be pushing up the dandelions, a great dramatist will appear who will be unable to find his ideal actor. The older I become, the more I am convinced that an actor's success depends primarily on the choice of his rôles, or, in other words that he should be first, last and all the time, a good psychologist.

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[1] Guitry died in 1925. (Translator's note.)

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One might imagine, from the chatter of parlor butterflies and other envious persons, that Boni de Castellane, another frequenter of Madame de Loynes' Salon, is a frivolous person, a society dandy, interested only in his silk socks, his neckties, his effulgent hats. It is true that he is a dandy, in the good balzacian sense of the word, that he believes in the importance of dress—a thing about which I, personally, have never troubled. But first and foremost, he is a serious, faithful and fervent student of foreign politics. For an entire evening he can discuss the subject with both competence and vigour, stressing the results of his deductions and inductions in order to get them squarely in your head. But I have a terrible, a simply ghastly fault; I have never been able to get up any interest in the hypotheses and long-range calculations of foreign politics. It all seems to me to be vague and hazy. So, though I have a real liking for the charming character of Boni de Castellane, I have trouble following him in the labyrinthine windings of his hobby. He probably regards me as a feather-brained sort of person, whereas I am prepared to declare that if Talleyrand came back to earth he would be proud of his descendant and disciple.

Madame de Loynes was distinctly friendly to Boni de Castellane and made Capus, Donnay, Lemaître, and the rest of us, hold our tongues when he began one of his lectures on Germanism, Pan-Slavism, the rôle of Austria-Hungary or the future of Constantinople. I am sure Cousin Donnay won't mind if I say that he is better at psychology than foreign politics. Capus, indeed, took up the subject late in life, as director of the "Figaro," but in the days I am now speaking of, that is, about 1901, he was more or less of a tyro. Lemaître had no taste for diplomats. Hence our inattention had to be constantly rebuked and our interruptions suppressed from time to time. Besides, Boni de Castellane does not merely ask your approval, he wants to know the grounds for it. I took care always to make Donnay and Capus answer back; in fact, I insisted that they develop their point of view at length—the best method for not having to do any talking myself. Meanwhile Judet, wrinkling up his eye-brows and perched on top of his two pillars of military serge, maintained a disdainful silence. For he, and he alone, knows the secret of the universe. He will utter it only on *Jud(et)ment* day, if the Almighty asks him in a properly polite manner.

Besides his knowledge of foreign politics, Boni de Castellane knows how to entertain; in other words he would make a perfect ambassador. I cannot endure those social gatherings where, in the midst of crowds of decorations, dress-coats and jewels, one meets nobody but old ladies with their dresses cut below their waists and old gentlemen burdened with honours and dull anecdotes. Nevertheless I remember pleasantly a sumptuous reception given by Boni de Castellane at his pink marble palace in the avenue du Bois de Boulogne. It was like Cinderella's ball. At the top of the monumental staircase, glittering as though made of ice, a perfect orchestra accompanied by voices played "Vive Henri IV." The master of the house received his ten thousand guests in a most gracious manner, managing—incredible though it seems—to find something special to say to each. The refreshment room was neither a free fight nor a cheap restaurant. You had a chance to eat cold meat and actual jelly that was almost as good as what you had at home. The pretty women were more numerous than the old hags, thanks largely to the almost entire absence of the foreign element. I expected every minute to see Puss-in-boots come in with the carriage made of a pumpkin. Only a few people can make a fairy tale come to life.

When Paul Déroulède returned from exile, his first "private" dinner, as he expressed it, was at Madame de Loynes' house. This good and upright man, with his fluent, almost too fluent, speech and warm, spontaneous cordiality, possessed all the outer aspects of a leader. Unfortunately he lacked the weight, the clairvoyancy and the intellectual authority necessary for such rôle. Incapable of leading anywhere, he was also incapable of stimulating any superior mind, or indeed even any thoughtful one. He had a love for vague formulas and a dislike for precise details. It struck me that applause was sufficient for him and that he lived wrapped in a dream full of hazy aspirations and fond memories. The dinner I speak of was a gay one. Marcel Habert, Déroulède's great friend and the best-hearted of men, knew how to get his idol going, and Lemaître led the guest of the evening on to tell anecdotes in which he appeared to his advantage. The name of Maurras came up in the conversation and Déroulède, in accordance with a generally admitted and quite erroneous idea of the time, declared that Maurras had a remarkable brain, was an able dialectian, but lacked practical common sense and any adequate idea of what could or could not be done in given circumstances. I differed with him entirely and attempted to show that, in the case of Maurras, thought and action are intimately associated, indeed, that they both spring from one of the most extraordinarily fine minds I have ever encountered. Lemaître backed me up. Déroulède, the cheers of the crowd at the Gare d'Orléans still in his ears, refuted us with inconclusive arguments that had nothing to do with the case. For a few moments the difference of opinion threatened to cast a blight on the dinner-party. Already dear Madame de Loynes was beginning to look distressed and to cast anxious glances our way, when a diversion of a gastronomic sort occurred and the conversation flowed into another channel.

After dinner, however, in the hall, where rings at the door-bell and new arrivals interrupted us constantly, Déroulède again resumed his attack. I let him do so and offered no resistance, for I felt the uselessness of trying to combat with any arguments the flood of political Romanticism, dating from 1871-1880, which poured from his fluent tongue. While I thus ignored his arguments I studied the man himself, as a specimen of a brainless generation. He gloated over his formulas and his catch phrases as a child gloats over a chocolate-cream. Occasionally he would pause to let me express my amazement. Round about us, Houssaye shook his long, long beard, some one else applauded noisily, and Delafosse, coffee cup in hand, murmured "What an extraordinary man, what a leader!" A leader possibly, but one who did not know in what direction to lead.

During dinner we had spoken of duels, former and recent, especially the one between Déroulède and Jaurès. Naturally, that worm of an Arthur Meyer, Prince of Cowards, had been mentioned, too. Consequently, the latter's sudden appearance in a gathering which had just before been listening to accounts of his misdeeds provoked considerable amusement, the reason for which quite escaped him. Scratching his nose and pulling at his scanty side-whiskers, he too began to chuckle thereby further increasing our mirth. Lemaître had an inspiration when he remarked: "Cheer up, Meyer, if if isn't fame, it's something mighty like it." You should have seen his face as he spoke! Alas, dear Lemaître, it is indeed sad to think that we shall hear your voice again only in our memories.

In the years which preceded the death of Madame de Loynes, which took place in 1908, Lemaître produced at the Théâtre de la Renaissance, under Guitry's management, two of his plays, "La Massière," which was a success, and "Bertrade," which failed, being bitter and much too sad. The author of "Impressions de Théâtre" took both results philosophically but Madame de Loynes did not share his detachment. Huddled up between my wife and me in the back of a stage box, she suffered in body and soul while the actors passed back and forth across the stage, speaking their parts. In the intermissions, people who were in the habit of coming to her house came one by one to assure her that everything was going splendidly, even though things were quite the opposite. She listened with a little sceptical smile which it hurt you to see. On the other hand, when applause broke out, with that spontaneity no audience can disguise, the dear woman bloomed once more and regained her courage. Regularly, in the third intermission, I undertook the task of going behind the scenes and congratulating author and performers. Guitry, good natured and sceptical, sat at his make-up table smoking his eternal stubby cigarette, and received congratulations politely. He dropped bits of last-minute advice to different members of the company, never losing his head over anything, and listening to gossip without paying much attention. Madame Judic, who once upon a time had been so pretty, still looked charming as a grandmother, and enjoyed the last rays of her former glory. The other actors had to be satisfied with what was left over. The various critics filed by, none of them very clever, very well informed, or very brilliant, but all anxious to please the man whom each and every one of them acknowledged as his master.

About the middle of every spring, Madame de Loynes withdrew to a big, charming, old-fashioned villa, surrounded by gardens, at the Parc des Princes. There she continued to receive and give dinner-parties with the same graciousness and even the same abundance as she did in Paris. For those who did not have a motor, it was quite a long trip back through the empty Bois de Boulogne and far-away Auteuil. Nevertheless, you were sure of meeting there every one of the regular habitués, and the menus did not suffer in any way. After dinner, when the weather was exceptionally fine, we strolled about the garden; more frequently we went on to a glass-enclosed veranda where there was also a billiard table. Lemaître sported his grey alpaca coat and straw hat, while Arthur Meyer, encased in a very shiny dress shirt, looked like a sort of boiled lobster with a Jew's head. If it rained, or if there was a storm, the "toffs" took the others back to town in their limousines or their coupés, that is, unless horse, coachman, or chauffeur had the colic, in which case they were glad enough to accept a seat in the hired hack of one of the commoners. I have often noticed how rich people are frequently at the mercy of their servants in this matter, and have to go without their vehicles or else take great care not to call on them too often. Great wealth involves a slavery from which those with smaller fortunes escape. Indeed it is enviable only when one sees it from afar.

CHAPTER XVII

When Marchand Came Back from Africa—Madame de X, a Daughter of Apollo—Marcel Proust at the Café Weber.

IT is always worth while to see what a hero looks like. I remember, as though it were yesterday, the first time that I met Jean Marchand, just back from his trip across Africa. It was at No. 9, rue Richepanse, in Mariéton's little ground-floor apartment, full of books and ornaments. Paul was giving a dinner. One end of the table touched the wall, the other was against the door, and the piano scraped our backs. The food, sent in from Prunier's round the corner, included consommé, fish, roast, chicken and rice and sauces of cream and curry, and an ice. The trusty *concierge* acted as butler. Eating, drinking, singing, the recitation of verses, and the discussion of poetry, philosophy and literature, was the order of the day. Pretty young women of society or the stage played up to the host and his guests, encouraging competition in wit and poetry as of old at the Courts of Love. Nothing could be more gay, more merry, more genial. Even the chaffing at Mariéton's parties was winged with wit; no clownish remarks or doubtful stories were tolerated.

The dinner was on the table, the soup smoking in the tureen, when the door opened and Marchand entered, slim and straight in his evening clothes, his black beard neatly trimmed, his face pale, pride and merriment in his kindly glance. One felt that Courage, Honour and Glory walked by his side, but unostentatiously, like familiar friends. A Latin word sums up the whole thing: *Virtus*. The great soldier adopted an attitude which, in five minutes, made us all feel we had known him five years. He represented a delightful combination of melancholy and gaiety, listened attentively and spoke briefly and picturesquely. Old Mounet-Sully, whom we spoke of amongst ourselves as "Mounet-Sublime," expressed the compliment we all had in our minds, "You do not need to be so charming."

"Geniality is part of a soldier's equipment, at least with us, the sailors and the colonial troops. I can be severe only when on duty."

The swiftness and firmness of Marchand's glance indicated a good observer, forever haunted by some great vision. It happened that our very first talk turned on the necessity of having a vision to stimulate and maintain one's ardour in action, and on the opposition fools seek to establish between vision and action. Marchand talked in a strong but pleasant voice, hesitating slightly on certain consonants. His laugh was clear and merry, he made few gestures. Everything about him indicated a leader, and inspired the instinctive loyalty which is the foundation of confidence and heroic devotion.

A little later, my mother, who loved and admired Marchand as I love and admire him myself, gave a reception for him in our big apartment in the rue de l'Université. It was an unforgettable occasion. All the élite of Paris society, and of the literary, artistic, scientific world, were there, the people whose opinion determines success, and who do not give laurel wreaths for nothing. They all gathered to pay homage to the man to whom Coppée had given the magnificent title "Africanus." For two hours, as old and young passed before him to shake him by the hand, Marchand did not show the slightest fatigue or impatience. Madame Félia Litvinne and Mademoiselle Hatto of the Opera sang divinely. Mounet-Sully read in his inimitable manner selections from "Contes du Lundi" and Musset's poems. A group of young girls sang choruses of old folk songs. The general atmosphere was one of gaiety and high confidence, the splendid uniforms of Captain Baratier and Commandant Hourst lending brilliance to the scene. I believe a strong personality in such surroundings, when it feels itself the center, the sun around which everything revolves, radiates light and illuminates everybody around. There, for a couple of hours clever men transcended themselves, pretty women were lovelier than ever. I sometimes meet someone who was at that reception, and we always exclaim, "What an apotheosis that was!" I have been to many parties in my time, but never to one that seemed as brilliant as this. Without undue filial vanity, I can say that it owed its unique character to my mother, that marvellous organizer, and to the hero of the evening.

Coppée went about from group to group laughing and chatting. "What a stunning figure Marchand is! He's head and shoulders above us poor Academicians. Madame Daudet, I wish that Alphonse could be here to-night." Rochefort, pulling down his cuffs, and waving his little arms, was among the gayest. His sharp claws drawn in for once, he teased all of us, which showed that he was in high good humour. The sparkling beauty of his young wife and her gracious manner showed that even a tiger and a polemical writer can be domesticated. Once in a while, Rochefort would turn to her and inquire gently: "Isn't that so, Marguerite?" Yet at the first sign of contradiction, or even of reluctant assent, from anybody he was speaking to, Rochefort's laughing glance darkened, and he would sniff like an angry cat.

I have often noticed that true soldiers, those who are born to their careers, are at home anywhere. I have seen Marchand just as much himself, as entirely at his ease, surrounded by artists, or society people, or politicians, as in the field. The reason he is so remarkable is that he likes both action and thought, and delights in any sort of a problem. He thirsts for danger and the unknown in any field. Pedantic scholars annoy him, no matter with what subject they deal, and he rips up their theories, their ready-made formulæ, with a scornful laugh. At the time of which I am speaking, he was highly suspicious of politics and rightly so. He was conscious of the desire of political parties to enlist him, and he was resolved to remain independent. The overwhelming popularity he had suddenly achieved did not turn his head or cause him to change his point of view in the least. Fame failed to intoxicate him. Indeed I am inclined to think that his celebrity annoyed him, like anything else that was merely temporary, not permanent. He is a man who likes to feel firm ground under his feet, to have honest, outspoken people about him, to hold clear-cut views. We have seen a great deal of each other, he and I, and have been very fond of each other, but we have never tried to influence one another in any way. His political views are not the same as mine, and he thinks mine are impractical. He likes people I cannot abide, and vice versa, but two links bind us together: our desire to test all our ideas in our living, and our common love for France. In spite of all he has already done for this country, I consider Marchand a man who has still more to give. He is so full of possibilities that even death, which has often passed close by him through his total disregard of his own safety, seems to have been repulsed by his overflowing vitality. As I write these lines, Marchand is fighting somewhere in the front line, fighting with the energy and courage with which he has always fought.

* * *

I do not care for puzzles, nor can I be accused of masking the people mentioned in these memoirs. Nevertheless, I prefer to let my readers guess for themselves the name—incidentally one of the great names of French history—of a certain young and brilliant woman, a writer of lyric poems. Her exuberant gaiety and silvery laughter filled the houses where she was a frequent guest. She lashes the coursers of Phœbus at dizzy heights through the wide gulfs of verbal fancy, metals and stones come alive at her touch, the walls of the infinite draw back as she approaches. Her mother having been a fine musician, her sense of the music of words comes to her naturally. Her ideas and opinions remain immature, but are poured out so magnanimously that the cheap stones of 1789 sparkle like real jewels in her work, as in Michelet. I used to like arguing against her, to see how she brought up all the fallacies of the last century, and of the end of the eighteenth, all the errors of the Romantics and the Encyclopedists, decking them out in modern trimmings, and making them look quite fresh, thanks to her ardour and vivacity. Though her ancestors were Roumanian heroes, she seems anything but foreign, with her delicate but intense personality, her burning idealism, the contrast between her expressions and her thoughts. Or one might say that she is foreign in so far as she does not belong to our own time, but is a reincarnation of those noble ladies who, while they sentimentalized over the idea of fraternity, were driven to the scaffold.

The prose of this daughter of Apollo does not, in my opinion, equal her poetry, which is remarkable in the descriptive passages for its suggestive melancholy, though sometimes it is both too long and too vague. But I prefer her conversation to everything else she does. She talks with enchantment, the power to soothe all the pain and weariness which our hearts ever feel at the contemplation of the sordid problems of life. What fire-works in her speech, what Venetian fêtes! She sits, such a tiny thing, in the depths of a big armchair, or leans over her embroidery and looks up from under a big hat, reaching out with her slim, swift fingers to catch at the word she wants, and evoking bright visions as she talks. We see Racine as the little vagabond at La Ferté-Milon; Pascal, the boy prodigy, bending over his copy-books; Mozart the wonder child, twisting about on his piano-stool while the Austrian court watches him in amazement; La Fontaine, the friendly old fellow whom nobody bothers about, and whose cakes the children steal. She conjures up the dreams of great writers, from Byron, consumed with desire to reach unattainable heights, to Musset, the philosopher in motley; from Madame de Sévigné, overflowing with maternal tenderness but scratching all the world about her, to that hermaphrodite, George Sand, with her extraordinary gifts and no less extraordinary weaknesses. Without the slightest critical sense as far as living authors are concerned, this woman turns the light of her high-strung sensitiveness on the dead. It plays about them like a ray of sun on the innumerable leaves of a forest. I believe that Shakespeare, who knew almost everything, past, present, and future, drew her prophetically as Queen Mab. When, on the stroke of four, she entered the drawing-room of her hostess, gracefully bundled up in her velvet coat, glowing with all the gaiety she was about to dispense, and all the fancies she was about to tell us, I heard the tinkling bells in the famous *scherzetto* of Berlioz, from "Roméo et Juliette."

Mab, Mab, la messagère fluette et légère
Elle a pour char une coque de noix,
Que l'écureuil a façonnée.
    Les doigts de l'araignée
    Ont filé ses harnois.[1]

I write these memoirs with the detachment of one who speaks from beyond the grave, although I am still freely alive. I seek neither to flatter nor to slander anyone. I do not care whom I please, nor whom I offend. This lady, expressive and delicate though her poetry is, lacks the willingness to efface herself, to keep her own image from coming between the outer world and the picture she presents. The Provençal poet, Aubanel, has said: "Qui chante son mal, enchante." (He who sings of his own grief charms his listeners.) But in order to do this, the poet must voice a universal sentiment. Montaigne and Rousseau, when they talk about themselves, do not give an impression of speaking from a personal standpoint. Their shafts sink deep, beneath strata and upper layers of the ordinary human being, and touch the bedrock of all human nature. Ye who scatter eloquent verses, with your eyes fixed on the ever-green laurel wreath, see to it that your ego is drowned in the sea or lost amid the stars. Only thus may you hope to win the victor's crown, only thus may you pluck the laurel, and be above envy and sarcasm.

Our generation has known one ridiculous male blue-stocking, far too abundant and discursive, but nevertheless an outstanding figure, namely Robert de Montesquiou. It has known one poet who sings with charm and tenderness, if a little too languishingly, of rustic evenings and the souls of young maidens, Francis Jammes. It has also known that voluble and ingenious versifier, who extracts rhymes as vigourously as though he were pulling teeth, that insufferable neurasthenic, perched on the running board of Barnum's car—you know whom I mean, Edmond Rostand. We have had also a lyrical soul gifted almost to excess with every verbal artifice and charm, of whom I have just spoken as "a daughter of Apollo."

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[1] "Mab, the light and ethereal messenger, rides in a chariot made from a nutshell by a squirrel. The fingers of the spider wove her harness."

Then there are Mallarmé, with his magic, his sparkle, and his cloudy thought; and great, haggard Verlaine; gentle, scholarly Sully Prudhomme, Mendès the errotic, hollow Heredia, and all the rest. But if poetry consists in being bound to the universe by truer and closer relations than those which bind ordinary mortals, in the power to link in harmony notes which mysteriously go together though they seemed far apart, and to extract the essential fact from the trivial incident, the eternal truth from the temporary appearance, then the great, invincible, one and only poet of our day is Paul Claudel.

* * *

I set down the axiom that a reputation made in the salons can be destroyed in the café. On the other hand a reputation established in the café is not destroyed in the salons. When I say this I know that the ghosts of Paul Arène and Monselet will clap their hands with joy. Even the Goncourts, who ran down the café and sacrificed it to the magnificent boredom of Princess Mathilde's society, were delighted when they had the chance to relax and speak out their minds at the dinners at the restaurant Magny. None of the men who went to Weber's would have listened for five minutes to a General Galliffet or a Gabriel Hanotaux. The café bore is less smug, less slickly varnished than the drawing-room variety; he at least keeps his individuality. Only real humour is accepted at the café, and it receives prompt recognition in hearty mirth, whereas "drawing-room wit" is too often a make-believe, thin colourless stuff which is nursed along by forced, conventional smiles. In short the café is the home of frankness and genuine mirth, whereas the salon —except that of a Madame de Loynes—is a school for triteness and fashionable dullness. Verlaine, the exquisite, and Moréas, great and lofty, were products of the café; Robert de Montesquiou and heaven only knows how many useless, ridiculous muses come out of the salon. I can easily imagine Immortality as a cashier sitting behind her desk and addressing amiable nods to a few fortunate customers.

About half-past seven, a young man used to drop in to the Café Weber in the rue Royale. He was pale, with eyes like a deer, always nibbling or pulling one end of his drooping brown mustache, and wrapped up in woolens like a Chinese idol. He would ask for a bunch of grapes and a glass of water, declaring that he had just got out of bed, he had the grippe, he was going home, and the light hurt his eyes. He would look about, anxiously at first, then mockingly; finally he ended by breaking out in a delighted laugh, and not leaving after all. Soon he began to talk and from his lips there flowed, in hesitating, hurried tones, extraordinarily original remarks, and diabolically clever comments. His surprising figures played about in the upper regions like a kind of celestial music, such as one might have heard floating above the Globe Tavern, among the companions of the divine Shakespeare. This young man had something of Puck, something of Mercutio, about him, and pursued several trains of thought simultaneously. He was clever in finding excuses for his good-nature, but was devoured by ironic scruples, was naturally complicated, quiveringly sensitive, strangely silky. He was the author of an original, rather mad, book, full of promise, called "Du Côté de Chez Swann."[1] His name was Marcel Proust.

"I beg your pardon, sir, don't you think that . . ." Thus the insidious fellow would begin a conversation, and his unsuspecting prey would fall a victim to his powers of analysis, working somewhat in the manner of a thousand laborious ants. For while Proust, with part of his brain, admires and enjoys the sight of something, he criticizes it with another part, and with a third stands off watching indifferently what the other two are doing. I am not surprised that Proust is always tired. I never knew anyone so perpetually haunted by the psychology and physiology of his contemporaries and their forbears, nor anyone who can so completely take their point of view. He is a master of metempsychosis, a phenomenon of autocreative imagination. On the other hand, he can act for himself and prove his will power when he needs to.

For instance, one evening as he entered the restaurant, Marcel thought he heard an elderly and elegant diplomat named Monsieur de Lagrenée, saying something disagreeable about him. He came over to me. "Monsieur, I cannot bear a thing of this kind. I dislike to make a fuss; nevertheless I shall be greatly obliged to you if you will ask Monsieur de Lagrenée whether he intended to insult me, and if he did not, ask him to present his apologies.'

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[1] This was written in 1916-17. Proust died in 1922. (Translator's note.)

Robert de Flers, the playwright, the most tactful of men, was asked to co-operate with me. We were much worried, for the offender, at least the man we took to be the offender, although no longer young, was a crack shot and expert swordsman, while Marcel was nothing of a warrior. But everything passed off smoothly. Monsieur de Lagrenée said to us: "Gentlemen, I declare on my honour that I never had the slightest intention of insulting Monsieur Proust, whom, as a matter of fact, I have never met. I will add that I do not in the least object to having a young man so touchy. In fact, his sensitiveness makes me like him." Then he turned to me: "Your grandmother, Monsieur Daudet, was a friend of my dear sister, a fact which does not help me seem any younger. It was necessary that Monsieur Proust should take offense at a remark not intended for him, in order that you and I should meet. How interesting life is!" This is an instance of the magical atmosphere floating about Marcel and anything one happens to undertake for him.

Marcel Proust hates the country. It upsets his carefully arranged sedentary life, the voluntary confinement in which he reads, dreams, and thinks, and which releases him from the obligations into which his excessive kindness and friendliness would lead him. We once met, some twenty years ago, at the Hotel de France et d'Angleterre, in Fontainebleau, where we spent a week. During the day Proust kept to his room but in the evening he allowed himself to be persuaded to take a drive through the forest under the stars. He proved the most fanciful, the most whimsical, the most delightful of companions. It was as though a will-o-the-wisp had lit on the cushions of the victoria. Since Marcel does not see what others see, he does see what they do not. It is as if he slipped behind a tapestry and studied its pattern, all the details of its fabric, even at the risk of being taken for a rat by Hamlet. Proust has made a mosaic composed of his observation of actual things, a sort of abstract world in which he dwells quite happily, separated from everything and everybody by a sort of transparent screen.

On another occasion, my brother Lucien managed to persuade him to pay us a visit in Touraine. He came down on the evening train, spent the night in a cloud of Espic cigarette smoke, which he uses for his asthma, and left the next morning declaring that the tranquil magnificence of the Loire is unequalled. This sick meteor, however, left a trail of light in its wake, and I quite believe that our friend Proust has become phosphorescent through excess of intellectual brilliancy.

At the very height of the political conflict in 1901, in other words in the midst of the Dreyfus Case, Proust conceived the idea of giving a dinner party with sixty guests of various shades of opinion. Every piece of china was liable to be smashed. I sat next to a charming young person, looking like a portrait by Nattier or Largillière, who, I afterwards learned, was the daughter of a prominent Jewish banker. Anatole France presided at the next table. The bitterest of enemies ate their *chaud-froid* within two yards of each other, for the currents of understanding and benevolence which originated in Marcel flowed about the guests and enveloped them in coils. For the space of two hours the greatest imaginable good-will reigned among the warriors. I doubt if anyone except Proust could have accomplished that feat. As I was complimenting the host on his achievement he replied modestly: "But, monsieur, really, monsieur, it all depends on the first reaction to each other of the different characters." I gathered that he realized the danger of his experiment and was pleased to see it succeed.

Proust has an ultra-refined taste in literature. He has explored the authors of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries down to their very foundations. He can write Michelet that is better than Michelet and turn out Bossuet by the yard. At the same time he can listen with the expression of an attentive school boy to two fools quarreling over the respective merits of Bossuet and Michelet. In fact, he enjoys the depths of their absurdity. He has a sense of caricature, and appreciates how a human being is twisted by his habits, his mannerisms, and surroundings. In Proust is the acute vision of La Bruyère and of Meredith, obscured by a mist of childishness rising from his reminiscenses of his own childhood, which are unbelievably vivid. I feel Proust is haunted by memories of himself, that he hears constantly the sound of a thousand tiny streams flowing through his veins which have their sources in the hearts of his ancestors and his own youth. If he can manage to guide his steps, to control himself, to establish firmly his literary point of view, he will one of these days write on the margin of life itself something quite extraordinary. All the material is within his reach.

Toulet (pronounced Toulette), on the other hand, the author of "Mon Amie Nane," "Monsieur du Paur," and twenty other exquisite tales, occasionally errs in the opposite direction. He writes sometimes with too many ellipses, too many contractions, yet he is a man who knows and loves his native tongue. You should have seen him at Weber's, thin and satirical, leaning over his glass of whisky and soda, with eye slanted upward, sparkling and watching the world go by, as he pulled away at his little beard and clenched his hands as though he were going to stretch himself. He lived in the same apartment as Curnonsky, the humorist. If you dropped in to see them about noon, you would find them still in bed, in adjoining rooms equally untidy, equally filled with books. Each would be reading a volume of Bayle's eighteenth century historical dictionary. They would admit having gone down, after Weber closed, to the bar at the Café de la Paix, and having stayed there till three before going home to the rue Villersexel across the river, two steps from where I live.

Sometimes, although not as often as we should have liked, Claude Debussy, with a forehead like a Chinese pug dog, joined us at Weber's. His favorite dish—"Tell me what you eat and I'll tell you who you are"—was a not too well-done egg with a little piece of liver or kidney *au jus*. I pass on this gastronomic detail to the admirers of "Pelléas et Mélisande," which I consider to be the masterpiece of contemporary French music-drama. Like Toulet, Debussy is a man of extreme refinement; and like him is master of all the secrets of his art. You might have expected that the contact of two such similar temperaments would produce a shower of sparks. Not a bit of it. They were not hostile but neither were they friendly. Debussy would munch those little salted potato chips provided at bars to increase your thirst, smoke an Oriental cigarette, sniff a couple of times, make one or two cutting remarks and go off, head and thoughts in the air.

But there were others: Forain, Mariéton with his stutter, and, among the younger men, Louis de La Salle. It was to the latter I said one day: "You are a fighter. Don't you forget it." On October 2, 1915, being away from Paris for a few days, I received several letters announcing the irreparable loss to France and the "Action Française" in the death of Léon de Montesquiou, killed in Champagne a week before. One of the letters was from Louis de La Salle, lieutenant in the Foreign Legion, who was near our friend when he fell. It hailed briefly the sacrifice of Léon de Montesquiou and ended in a phrase which meant: "Soon it will be my turn." It was true; a few hours later he also fell, sword in hand, leading his men into action. How many of those young men whom we met at Weber's, whom we saw going about from one table to another between ten at night and one in the morning, laid down their lives for France! What an immense funeral cortège we seem to see passing at nightfall up the rue Royale!

CHAPTER XVIII

The Dreyfus Case—The Reactions in Literary Circles—Anti-Clericalism and Anti-Militarism—The "Ligue de la Patrie Française"—The Tragic Death of Gabriel Syveton.

FOR a detailed, chronological history of the Dreyfus Case, I refer my readers to the "Précis de l'Affaire Dreyfus," compiled by Henri Dutrait-Crozon. This "précis" is a masterpiece and contains all the essential facts. In the following pages I shall seek only to recall the general atmosphere of the time and portray some of the figures chiefly affected by the great storm which for ten years shook French political life as a gale shakes a flag.

It is 1894, twenty-four years after our crushing defeat and the loss of Alsace-Lorraine. During the entire period the country, which remains, in spite of everything, the most easily governed in the world, has suffered the disorganizing effects of popular government. The nationalist spirit is comatose in the press and among the upper classes, and among politicians it has shown no life at all since its set-back at the time of the Boulangist movement. Among certain individual journalists and writers it has remained active and in the French General Staff, which silently and laboriously is preparing a victorious resistance to the next German onslaught. Germany has remained in a threatening attitude since 1875. Under William II, quite as much as under William I, she has alternately blown hot and cold. Now she pets us, now she gives us a touch of the lash; always she continues to exploit our political and administrative weaknesses. Two forces only bar her way: the General Staff, a gathering of brilliant men who pay no attention to rumours from without; and beside it, helping it, warning it, the Intelligence Service, magnificently well organized. The object for our hereditary enemy is two-fold; to destroy the General Staff and to do away with the Intelligence Service. Here we have the Dreyfus Case in a nutshell.

Every form of political campaign undertaken in modern times depends on the press. That is why we find a writer or a journalist at the head of every movement. Anti-Semitism was led by Drumont. Zola led the supporters of Dreyfus. The Royalist movement centers around Charles Maurras. Let us, therefore, take a rapid survey of the newspaper world in Paris between 1894 and 1900, or, in other words, as it was at the moment of Dreyfus' arrest and conviction, then during the three years silence which followed and, finally, when the Dreyfus Case really broke out.

Besides Drumont, who has founded the paper called "La Libre Parole" and whom we have already met in an earlier chapter, we have Henri Rochefort and the "Intransigeant," naturally taking a patriotic stand against the Jews. Unfortunately, Drumont was not as brilliant politically as he was as a writer. He wrote magnificent articles, worthy of a place in an anthology, but he was not the type to carry on the battle from day to day. It was somewhat the same with Henri Rochefort. This revolutionist and former *communard* was really an unconscious conservative. He adored his country, the charm of its children, the beauty of its women, the courage and intelligence of its soldiers, the wit of its writers, and the firm, well-balanced vision of its artists. On the other hand, mathematical demonstration bored him, and in his paper, as in "La Libre Parole," there was no one to refute day by day the false allegations of the opposing party. The *Dreyfusards* took ample advantage of this state of things. The Socialist press was represented by "La Petite République," to which Jaurès was a contributor. The latter was later indebted for his position as editor of "L'Humanité" to a group of twelve Jewish millionaires who supported Dreyfus. The "Figaro," on account of the excessive modesty of Calmette, was in the hands of his associate editors. The policy of the paper changed gradually; at the outset it was nationalist but it later became one of the most prominent pro-Dreyfus organs. It is worth noting here that the political victory of the supporters of Dreyfus brought forward Joseph Caillaux, who from 1905 to 1914 defended the idea of a Franco-German alliance, in other words the sacrifice of France to Germany, and that Gaston Calmette, who by his inaction contributed to the success of the *Dreyfusards,* died in 1913, murdered by Madame Caillaux, who feared the revelations of her husband's pro-German policy. Here we have an interesting example of cause and effect.

On the sixth of January, 1895, before the "Figaro" went over to the enemy, I published in it an account of the disgracing of Dreyfus, which had taken place the day before in the central courtyard of the École Militaire. I called my article "The Punishment." Twenty-five years have since elapsed, but I can still see this man of straw marching mechanically past us and calling out in a flat, toneless voice that lacked conviction: "I am innocent!" He produced a most unfavorable impression on the spectators, and seemed a looker-on, himself, rather than an actor in a hideous ceremony whose meaning he did not appear to understand. Jules Huret told me afterwards that he could never forgive me for having said, "Dreyfus has a traitor's complexion." Yet that expresses it exactly. His skin was of an intermediary shade between a dead white and a dull earth-colour. Curiously enough, twenty-five years later when Malvy, former Minister of the Interior, appeared before the bar of the Senate, I saw that same colour again.

The "Temps" adopted the theory of Dreyfus' innocence almost from the outset. Adrien Hébrard, the editor, was personally sceptical, but was surrounded by a clique—Reinach, Ranc, etc.—who made the "Fatal Case" a chapter in the Laws of the Rights of Man. On "Le Journal," the Letelliers, father and son, were undecided. The elder feared everything and everybody, Mirbeau and Barrès, the Government, no matter who was in power, the police, the Chamber and the Senate. Consequently there was a certain amount of instability in his views and in the "policy" of the paper. Letellier Junior had nothing to say. Finally they arrived at a point where they inserted contradictory articles from one day to the next. The "Écho de Paris" on the other hand was resolutely anti-Jew. It quickly became the principal paper read in military circles and among the supporters of the "Ligue de la Patrie Française," which I shall speak of shortly. It had as contributors, Jules Lemaître, Barrès, and Quesnay de Beaurepaire. Since Clemenceau and his paper, "L'Aurore," supported Dreyfus, Ernest Judet in "Le Petit Journal," owned by the Marinoni brothers, inventors of the rotary printing process, was necessarily in the other camp. All their lives these two men have been in opposition, one coming up when the other went down, and vice-versa. Judet scored off Clemenceau at the time of the Panama scandals, but the latter has since had his revenge. The "Gaulois," in spite of being edited by Arthur Meyer, himself a Jew, came out against Dreyfus. This attitude brought Meyer two things: first, a large list of new subscribers, made up of conservative erstwhile readers of the "Figaro" who were now unable to accept that paper's stand on the question of the day, and, secondly, a reconciliation with Edmond Drumont. This reconciliation took place at a dinner given by my mother at her house, No. 41, rue de l'Université, and was as honest and sincere as their famous duel had been the opposite. Till the lonely, melancholy death of Drumont during the Great War, he and Meyer remained on good terms, "La Libre Parole" taking care not to rub its neighbour, "Le Gaulois," the wrong way.

Among the writers, opinions were equally divided. Alphonse Daudet had no love for the Jews. He was an ardent patriot. Indeed, one may say that in his immortal "Contes du Lundi" he eloquently defended the cause of his mutilated and bleeding country. He never forgot the trial of Marshal Bazaine, of which he was a spectator. He thrilled at the sound of a military band. He admired the army wholeheartedly, particularly as it personified to him that spirit of *la Révanche* which animated all his generation. He scorned those who held office under the Third Republic, all the more on account of the hopes he had placed in them at the beginning of their absurd régime. Nevertheless, he remained aloof from the movement in favor of General Boulanger because he considered the leaders, with the exception of Barrès, as being too much like the men whom they sought to replace. In fact, as we have already seen, most of the prominent writers did not participate in that movement and were hostile to the idea of a military dictatorship. As later events proved, the General, so handsome with his blond beard, would not have known how to establish one in any case. One notes with surprise to what a degree soldiers of high rank generally lack political ambition and how timid they are towards the civilian authority. This cowardice on the part of brave men who love their country, which the present form of government is obviously destroying, has puzzled me ever since I could think about things at all. It was not a soldier but a civilian, Gabriel Syveton, *deputé* for the second ward of Paris, who struck the horrible André, Minister of War, and creator of the card index of spies and secret accusers.

Thus Alphonse Daudet was naturally a firm *anti-Dreyfusard.* He showed it in 1897 (he died the 16th of December, that same year) at the first Balzac dinner given at the restaurant Durand, in the Place de la Madeleine. The other guests included Zola, Bourget, Coppée, Anatole France, and Barrès. In the conversation the Dreyfus Case, which had just begun to attract public notice, happened to be mentioned. My father, Bourget, Barrès, and Coppée at once supported the military judges who had conscientiously condemned him according to their lights. Zola and France took the diametrically opposite view. I can still hear the bitter lispings of the author of "La Débâcle," to whom the words "my country" had never meant anything at all. "There ith no thuch thing as treathon, my dear chap. It'th a thing invented by the Jethuitht, an inthane exprethion. There'th no thuch thing ath military thecreth. We are in the age of the telephone and the telegraph." What a beast he was! France, although they were on the same side in the discussion, seemed rather ashamed and tried to soften Zola's vehement stupidities with such expressions as, "Well, yes,—however,—to be sure." Barrès scowled darkly, and shrugged his shoulders. The repast was a gloomy one from then on and broke up rather coldly. Coming back in the carriage my father said, "I am afraid this first Balzac dinner will also be the last. How Zola hates the army! What has the army ever done to him?"

As Zola grew older, all the semi-illiterate theories of his youth rose to the surface. He took all officers of the higher ranks for pupils of the Jesuits, and consequently enemies of the people and empty rhetoricians. Envy lay at the bottom of his character and caused him to detest his friends, his fellow-writers, his rivals, as he hated his good-looking or healthy rich neighbours, the officers whom the women looked at, the heroes of history, the priests, able to confess and to absolve, the philosopher, the scholar, the lover, in short any and every man who enjoyed some superiority over his fellows. Émile Zola, with his forked nose, his feverish speech, his volubility, was the perfect type of bilious person who can derive pleasure from nothing but the misfortunes of others, who gloats on cases of insanity or sexual aberration, or on anything vile and ugly. This deep-seated vice was as incurable in him as avarice in Molière's Harpagon and Balzac's Grandet, or hypocrisy in Tartuffe. Zola took delight in the disgrace, dishonour, and death of his neighbour as other people delight in wine or in the company of pretty women. I did not realize this for some time, for he concealed it under an appearance of good-fellowship, exactly the opposite of his real feelings. But it came out when he questioned people about their health, or the health of their families, or about their incomes, and especially about their sales (if they happened to be authors who had just had something published). The Dreyfus Case gave him a chance to rid himself of gall. He hated France, where the only notoriety he was able to attain was of the unhealthy sort that might attend a champion sewerage-cleaner. He hated society, the critics, more or less everybody. Naturally timid and even cowardly—he hid under his bed when there was a thunderstorm—he suddenly felt courageous, in a civic sense, when an opportunity occurred to attack a certain symbol, meaningless as far as he was concerned but yet freighted with glory—his country's flag. How amusing it is to think this greatest of all authentic befoulers of everything that means the most to mankind should have been solemnly laid to rest in the Pantheon! That it was an anti-national government that did it, helps matters not a bit.

The day after the publication of the open letter, "J'Accuse," in the "Aurore," Georges Hugo and I went to call on Zola in his apartment in the rue de Bruxelles, all cluttered-up with imitation medieval carvings and bric-a-brac. The man had any number of carved wooden angels, gargoyles and near-gothic armchairs. How ugly it all was! He received us politely, assuring us Paty du Clam was a torturer, "a character for one of your novels, Léon," and the General Staff an assembly of Jesuits. We laughed about it as we came out, but we could not deny the evidence. Had we not just seen a Voltaire launched on the Calas Case, a Hugo in full effervescence over "Les Châtiments," a Moses attacking Sinai with his little horns? It was clear that a great sewer-pipe of Naturalism was about to break over France. "The country needth a bath of Juthtith, my dear children," Zola had declared. This same bath of imitation justice was the forerunner of another bath—of blood. With the campaign in favor of Dreyfus, Zola imagined he was entering the political arena. It was lucky he died thirteen years before the dreadful refutation of all his silly notions about universal peace.

Clemenceau was one of the leading figures in the Dreyfus Case, one of those who took it most to heart, who was the most obstinate, who did the most harm. Yet twenty years later he brought us peace by crushing treason behind the lines. His long, stormy, laborious life allowed him to achieve this glorious change of front, in which one sees the hand of Providence. At the same time, he has exposed himself to the hatred of his former allies, who disliked France and mocked at our flag. He broke off violently with George Brandes, Jew and germanophile, as well as with a number of others, his former friends. At the age of sixty-seven he turned over a new leaf. Not that, as far as appearances go, he has surrendered a single one of his old republican ideas. But the royalist blue of his native Vendée has overcome in him the politician and the *Dreyfusard.* He has felt that same great pity for the land of France which once animated Jeanne of Lorraine, and which can quite as well touch the tough old heart of a writer and orator as the simple soul of a little shepherdess. Another point in Clemenceau's favour is that he has never feared death. It was thanks to this, plus his having kept his brusque, incisive manner, his directness of vision and action, that he was able to attain his goal between July, 1917, and November, 1918. Soiled as he has been in the dishwater of politics, he has now taken his place in history wearing the victor's crown. For it was he who brought us back Alsace-Lorraine. For this the children of France shall forever call him blessèd—and especially since he dared to take office after the mistakes of those good-for-nothings, Viviani, Briand, Ribot, and Painlevé!

Sainte-Beuve once wrote—I don't remember just where—that more than one of his contemporaries would encounter thunderbolts and strange voices on the road to Damascus. In Clemenceau's case the thunder was that of the artillery, the voice that of his country in mortal danger. God used him at a given moment for a particular task. It is not necessary to have faith in order to become an instrument in the hands of the Almighty.

Anatole France, a delightful writer who had been more than severe in his criticism of Zola, was under the influence of the Jewish circle in which he found himself at the time of the famous trial. He was, indeed, extremely easy to influence and keep in order. I met him casually at my father's house, some thirty years ago, when he was just beginning to enjoy his great and well-earned reputation. In those days he agreed with anyone who happened to be speaking to him, but with an irony like that of Renan and an exquisite politeness. Later, about the year 1901, I dined opposite him at Marcel Proust's, and felt the charm of his quick intelligence and good nature. His mind was rather like that of Lemaître, though not so unexpected or incisive. Thanks to him, the *Dreyfusards* were able to boast of having a real, genuine Frenchman in their camp, and a very important one into the bargain. It was a nuisance, but it was not by any means the only anomaly in that extraordinary upheaval in ideas and feelings which, in 1899, preceded the catastrophe of 1914 as the hurricane wind sweeps over the forest ahead of the lightning and the flames.

It was quite natural for Octave Mirbeau to be a supporter of Dreyfus. I knew him well. He was a man whose moods changed as rapidly as the breezes on the Mediterranean. Good and kind as he was, generous to all "under-dogs," and devoted friend of all his friends, he yet was liable to fits of anger and vindictiveness. Then, as quickly, he would change again and overflow with friendliness towards those who had offended him. Temperamentally, he was a conservative, but the silliness of some of the drawing-room lizards he had met, and an innate repulsion for established authority, had transformed him into an anarchist. He hated policemen, customhouse officials, inspectors of all kinds, anyone who had a fixed income and lived on it, all process-servers, janitors, and servants. He declared that a Prefect was generally a pervert, and that for "Minister of State" you might as well say "robber." Popular government was distasteful to him, as he also loathed all members of the legal profession and bankers. There was nothing left for him to be fond of except children, tramps, very young women, five or six painters and sculptors, and dogs. He had always hated the Jews and was furious to find himself leagued with them as a result of his violent dislike for Rochefort, Drumont, Bouret, and the General Staff. I have never been able to explain his aversion towards the latter, for at heart he loved France and must have recognized the importance and value of the High Command.

As for the Case itself, Mirbeau and I argued about it only once or twice. He felt me uncompromisingly attached to my point of view and I realized it was hopeless to try to make him change his opinion. I pointed out he had in the past detested the writings and personality of Zola. "Since 'J'Accuse' appeared I have felt differently," he replied frankly. During our last discussion on the subject he declared that to him "a Nationalist was a synonym for a murderer." We let it go at that. But when we did happen to meet, at longer and longer intervals, I felt he disliked me in proportion to our former friendship, and that he considered the fault of my contrariness lay with my provençal ancestry. Thus he explained to himself my strange aberration in preferring my country to a Hebrew who had been convicted of treason several times over!

The War, whose approach he had not foreseen, the possibility of which he and so many others had denied, proved a profound shock to Mirbeau. It re-awoke his patriotism. He told me that he dismissed his Jewish secretary for having dared doubt our final success. His liking for me returned and he no longer considered my wholehearted devotion to the Nationalist cause as a sign of a taste for murder and forgery. His death grieved me sincerely. I consider that he and dear Gustave Geffroy—another, but unrepentant, *Dreyfusard*—were the two finest critics of form and color I have ever known, probably because our artistic tastes were very much the same. Whenever I went to see Mirbeau, I would stop in front of a field of irises painted by Van Gogh, who transposed into the painted flowers his complex sensations of the highly coloured southern crowd.

"You like that, don't you, Léon?"

"Much better than the famous 'memorandum' in the Dreyfus case."

"What a silly remark! They have nothing in common."

"Don't you make that mistake. Dreyfusism is a disease, with tentacles everywhere. It affects even one's personal æsthetics. There is such a thing as a *Dreyfusard* palette."

Jules Lemaître, on the other hand, was a true son of La Fontaine, a man whose common sense wore wings. Friendly towards his inferiors, but suspicious of society folk, endowed with a remarkably keen sense of humour and a well-balanced mind, he was an excellent scholar who sought in the humanists an escape from what is "human, all too human." He enjoyed day-dreams, meditative contemplation. The way in which he sacrificed his peace of mind and personal comfort in the interest of his country in connection with the Dreyfus Case was most meritorious. Doubtless our strong-minded and delightful friend, Madame de Loynes, to whom he was bound by ties of long-standing affection, contributed to his making this heroic decision. But he would never have taken up a cause he considered unjust or in any way crooked. I can testify that he studied and investigated the evidence in the Dreyfus Case closely before making up his mind. His keen glance quickly discovered the anti-French intrigues going on behind the comedy of pseudo-justice which so many honest folk accepted at its face value. At the same time he disliked intensely all internal friction and he had not the temperament which transforms a popular leader into a benevolent despot. His greatest weakness was his inability to impose his will or his point of view on anyone he cared for. After five minutes' discussion he would make concessions, as though the moment you agreed on general principles you automatically held the same opinions regarding practical methods and all the details which lead to success or failure. Madame de Loynes, far more able and obstinate than he, very often managed to correct these mistakes, but alas, she was not always present.

Another man who played a great rôle in the Dreyfus Case was Maurice Barrès. He adopted, however, an entirely personal attitude. Writer of genius, inspired patriot, valiant fighter, he lacks the instantaneous political insight of Maurras, and, now actor, now spectator, is liable to become totally indifferent to something in which he was passionately interested five minutes ago. In other words, his moods are all in all to him, as is frequently the case with literary men, and he is unwilling to restrain or inconvenience himself. I readily recognize this weakness in others as I, too, have it. On the other hand Maurras, even if he has had no dinner, and no chance to commence his daily article, will at nine o'clock at night be willing to receive and listen attentively to any old bore who in the midst of fifty silly remarks may give him a single useful or important piece of information. Barrès or I would simply tell a man like this to go to the devil. Barrès is an impatient person. He will at once give up trying to convince anyone he considers a fool or an idiot; and of course the person in question is offended because Barrès does not continue the argument. Moreover, his mind leaps at once to a pessimistic conclusion; he prefers to consider as impossible a thing his mind tells him will be difficult to achieve.

Naturally, those two defenders of the cause of Alsace-Lorraine and the idea of *la Révanche*, Madame Adam and Paul Déroulède, at once took their places in the ranks of the irreconcilable enemies of Dreyfus. They both recognized that the affair was in reality a new kind of attack on the part of Germany, an attempt to foment religious strife. They summoned their followers about them, Madame Adam devoting her activity to Parisian society, the diplomatic and political world, while Paul Déroulède took his stand in the market-place. Unfortunately Madame Adam's "Nouvelle Revue" had already cost her such large sums that, in 1900, she could work only with her little publication "Parole Française à l'Étranger," while Déroulède lacked political judgment and would not sacrifice his eloquence in favor of that close and exact refutation of documents which Maurras vainly recommended. When Déroulède appeared at public meetings, in his flapping cape, eloquent, generous but scatterbrained, I was reminded of Chamfort's expression, "It takes something besides a good heart to play a game of chess." In this case the chess game was an important one, since the stakes were the lives of a whole generation of Frenchmen.

The anti-clerical and anti-military movements date from long before the Dreyfus Case, but the Case, by placing at their service the wealth of the Jews and the political influence of the Germans, raised them to the rank of constitutional problems. Their appearance in the field of practical politics resulted, first, in a particularly harmful and demoralizing form of internal conflict, which, especially as regards public education, led to disastrous results, and second, to the dismantling of our system of national defense at the very moment when the latter was most necessary. This double result was accomplished by a handful of men animated by a hatred of the army and the Church.

As a matter of fact, it is utterly erroneous—but so very easy for those who are to blame!—to claim that the convulsions of history and all great political movements generally are not due to the doings of any single man or group of men, but that they, like the weather or an earthquake, are due to unknown and unknowable forces which we may call Fatality. This is the German doctrine, a result of the philosophy of the Subconscious; it may appeal, as an excuse, to an unsuccessful criminal. As a matter of fact, human events are controlled by human beings, they obey easily definable laws, and they can be controlled by acting on those same human beings. "Fatality" in economic spheres is generally the work of some clever politicians and bankers working hand-and-glove. On a higher scale, the same applies to international politics.

During the last war people frequently said the delay in our victory was due to causes over which we had no control, and which interfered with our military plans. We, the "Action Française," replied that Caillaux was responsible, Caillaux and those who supported him in Parliament, the Socialists who were his henchmen and, consequently, the tools of Germany. He and his followers sought to secure an unsatisfactory peace, a drawn game. Clemenceau, the realist, came into power in July, 1917, during the fourth year of the war. He arrested Caillaux in the following January, and victory began to appear seven months later. By November the enemy was on his knees. All the sophisms uttered by the supporters of Caillaux and the Internationale cannot prevail against this piece of evidence. Pro-German Fatality ceased to exist the moment a determined patriot took upon himself the task of performing the necessary act, namely putting behind the bars the personification of the "defeatist" doctrines and the distributor of hush-money.

Anti-clericalism is an old fad with the Republic. At the outset, under Gambetta, it had no connection with anti-militarism. By 1897, however, one could find traces of a simultaneous attack on the two pillars on which the French nation stands, the Church and the Army. It appears in the writings of Bernard Lazare and Zola. In a short time, such expressions as "the army of Jesuits," "the barracks supporting the convent," "the conspiracy of the cowls and uniforms" proved the combined hatred for the two vocations of priest and soldier, for the two forms of self-sacrifice, of mystic and patriot. Acting through the cheap daily papers, the attacks spread from the gatherings of free-masons and Jews, from the Lodge, the bankers' office and Synagogue to the common people who were literally soaked in doctrine. Yet this anti-Nationalist agitation, which later took the form of violent and destructive action, did not rise towards the men in power from the ranks of the common herd, to whom Gambetta referred as "the drunken slaves." It filtered down to them from the office-holders, from lawyers and judges attached to the government, from certain Jewish, liberal and conservative salons. The thing was proven at the dedication of the statue of Étienne Dolent. The ceremony, which took place in the midst of the agitation over Dreyfus, was held on the spot where the Renaissance philosopher was burned as a heretic. Émile Loubet, President of the Republic, presided, and there marched past him, not crowds of workmen, but gangs of criminals, singing the *Interna-*

tionale and the *Carmagnole*, carrying the red and black banners of Socialism and Anarchy. The moment that Dreyfus was in danger the government accepted aid from whatever direction it might come; if necessary, it would have consented to see Paris in flames, as it was during the Commune, if the same conflagration could have destroyed the verdict of the Court Martial at Rennes.

It was on the 19th of January, 1899, the same year that that verdict was handed down, that the first meeting of the "Ligue de la Patrie Française" was held, attended by an enormous crowd. François Coppée presided. I attended, accompanied by my mother, who was one of the first and most enthusiastic members. The partisans of Dreyfus, with their famous "manifesto of the intellectuals" in favor of their unattractive client, had irritated and annoyed the immense majority of Frenchmen. A genuine "intellectual," Charles Maurras, the finest mind of his generation, as far as wisdom, learning, and farsightedness are concerned, and three professors of the University of Paris, Gabriel Syveton, Henri Vaugeois, and Louis Dausset, took the initiative in preparing a solemn protest against the manifesto. The protest secured many signatures and formed the origin of the League, whose brilliant beginning seemed to promise a speedy victory. That same evening Lemaître spoke, describing most successfully the object of the League. Amongst his audience there was a number of officers in uniform. The League was non-partisan, since it included Republicans, Orleanists, Bonapartists, and anti-Semites. It sought not to alienate any of these parties, while at the same time attacking all those of every political opinion who supported Dreyfus. In other words the "Patrie Française" was an attempt to react politically against the anti-Nationalists, foreigners, Jews, and money-grubbers who at different periods of our history and especially since the Revolution have sought to undermine our country's prosperity, its honour and its mission in the world as a civilizing force. The front rank of these hostile forces was formed by politicians, legal authorities, or those who pretended to be such, serious, solid persons, of whom Waldeck-Rousseau was a typical example. The "Patrie Française" sent equally solid and serious persons out to fight them. Its leaders were eminent professors, members of the Academy. This was all very well. The League attempted by legal electoral means to combat the invasion of Hun capital mobilized to support Dreyfus and everything he personified. Nothing could have been sounder. But what was missing on our side was some stirring agitator, some man who knew how to arouse the masses, to kindle that popular enthusiasm which illuminated the beginnings of the Boulangist movement. Rochefort was ten years too old, Barrès had academic ambitions, in short, the League was too respectable, too reasonable, too conventional. It lacked someone to set things going, to upset the apple-cart. I loathe the sensational. But I believe an anti-government campaign can never succeed without a certain amount of violence and a resounding racket, some real lightning and thunder. The crowd expects this kind of thing from rebels and innovators. If it has to wait too long for it, it loses interest and goes home. Syveton slapped General André's face just six years too late. If anyone had done the same thing in 1898 to some prominent Jew, or leading spy, or someone else of the same calibre, it would have upset the plans of the supporters of Dreyfus, shocked their politicial hangers-on and aroused the masses. Handwriting experts, hypothetical questions, articles and pamphlets are all very well in their way, but political victory doesn't come that way.

The foregoing will have served to indicate some of the weaknesses which beset the cause of "La Ligue de Patrie Française." Its leaders were temperamentally incompatible, its followers were taken from too many different political parties, its aims were too vague. One of its most disastrous manœuvres was the forcing of Coppée's resignation as president on account of his prominence in Catholic circles and fear of alienating the other elements in the League. In spite of this mistake and the continual internal friction among those at the head of the organization, things were by no means hopeless on November 4, 1904, the day when Gabriel Syveton boxed the ears of the Minister of War. This took place in the Chamber of Deputies, in connection with revelations of the latter's system of secret accusations against officers whose political views were not those of the government. These reports, dealing with the private life of our principal officers, were known as the "*fiches*." We learned later that they were generally communicated to the War Office by the Masonic Lodges, and that a duplicate set found its way to Germany. Although the government attempted to have the ear-boxing incident treated as a simple matter to be judged by a police-court magistrate, public opinion demanded a formal trial. The latter was fixed for Friday, December 9. We hoped, by revealing everything we had been able to learn about the deliberate disorganization of the High Command, carried out first by General Galliffet, as servant of Waldeck-Rousseau, and later by General André, to arouse such a storm of popular indignation as would overthrow the Republic. The Thursday before the trial was a grey, cold day. "Ah, distinctly I remember, It was in the grim December . . ." I had been working on my novel, "Le Partage de l'Enfant," but stopped about four o'clock and left the house. I remember everything perfectly, the taste of the air, the mist, the terrace of the Tuileries. On arriving at the boulevard (I was on my way to the "Gaulois" at No. 2, rue Drouot), I met Gaston Jollivet. Even before he spoke I noticed how upset he was. As he seized my hand, he said, "You've heard the news, haven't you?"

"What news?"

"Syveton is dead. They say he was murdered."

I saw the buildings of the rue Drouot spin around as though on a merry-go-round. Calling a cab, I hurried out to the ordinary-looking house in the avenue de Neuilly where my friend had lived. There people moved about as though in a nightmare. Ménard, whose wife was the daughter of Madame Syveton by a former marriage, kept muttering, "Don't make a scandal. There mustn't be a scandal!" Someone I did not know led me to the study where the body lay, still bent double beside a newspaper. I noticed a scratch on the forehead and the horrible, stern look of the face. No one had bothered to close the eyes. We carried the corpse into another room where sat Madame Syveton, and I was struck by the fact that she did not appear at all overcome. Barrès came in. Something he said caused me to think he was inclined to the idea of suicide rather than a criminal attack. I took the opposite view.

It seemed incredible that such a fighter as my former school-fellow should have committed suicide on the eve of a trial which might have led him to the highest civic honours.

The official autopsy reported: "Death probably due to intoxication by carbon monoxide." The funeral service was held at Saint-Pierre-de-Neuilly, the actual burial at the Montparnasse cemetery. Our route took us through the greater part of Paris, from Neuilly to the Étoile, from the Étoile to the banks of the Seine, along the river as far as the Invalides and thence past the Gare Montparnasse. Up to now I have been present at three funerals which were attended by enormous crowds. That of Victor Hugo had about it something of an apotheosis, that of Alphonse Daudet took place in an atmosphere of general grief due to my father's well-known generosity and kindliness towards the poor, the third was that of Syveton. Here we felt about us a sense of mystery and of horror. The crowd had formed its own conclusions. It was convinced that a crime had been committed. Certain groups, fancying themselves better informed than their neighbours, adopted the theory of "suicide to conceal some shameful domestic secret." The atmosphere was tense. Never have I seen so many policemen; they seemed to spring up between the cobble stones, to ooze out of the walls. Lemaître said a few words beside the grave but he was not the man for moments like this, not the man to utter a ringing call for vengeance. As we were leaving the cemetery, Léon de Montesquiou, who was with the little group of the "Action Française," to which I did not yet belong, suddenly called out, "Down with the murderers!" About a hundred people, mostly students, took up the cry. For a second it seemed as though there might be a general rising. But a dozen agents were already dragging Montesquiou off to jail.

Three days later there appeared in the "Gaulois" an insidious note, indicating that the death of Syveton had its roots in some hideous family drama. This note was elaborated by the correspondents of the German and Austrian newspapers. The exact particulars of the story were never made clear but belief in it was strengthened by Madame Syveton's enigmatic attitude. She also called on Lemaître and Madame de Loynes and returned some eighty thousand francs which she declared Syveton had taken from the accounts of the League. In spite of everything, however, I cannot accept the idea. Even if there had been some shameful secret in his life—a fact, mind you, which was never proved—Syveton would not have committed suicide. I remain convinced that he was slain by a conspiracy between the German secret police and that of the French government, working probably through someone belonging to his *entourage*.

At any rate the Syveton case marked the break up of the "Ligue de la Patrie Française." A sudden quarrel between Rochefort and Lemaître finally brought the whole thing crumbling to the earth.

CHAPTER XIX

How I Became a Royalist—Charles Maurras—The Founding of the "Action Française"—Our Activity in Paris and the Provinces—The Camelots du Roi—Vive le Roi!

THE dissolution of the "Ligue de la Patrie Française" convinced me that the country could not be set on its feet by any system of political compromise. Since such a thing as a *good* Republican Party was contradiction in terms, it was necessary to do away with the republican form of government altogether. To avoid impending disasters we must replace it by a benevolent dictatorship. The arguments of my wife, converted to the Royalist cause some years previously, in spite of her extreme youth, probably influenced me to some extent. At first I made the classic objections to the policy of restoration. They melted like wax before the flame of Henri Vaugeois' arguments, the irresistible dialectic of Charles Maurras. In a very short time we were bound together in deep and enduring friendship. It was with enthusiasm that I enrolled myself in the little group of Royalists. Little it was, as far as numbers were concerned, but extraordinarily active and, even in those days, rich in the whole-hearted devotion of its members.

Henri Vaugeois, whom my wife nicknamed "Brother Wolf" on account of his bristly impetuosity, had been one of the founders of the "Ligue de la Patrie Française." He resigned from it as soon as he recognized its muddle-headedness and inefficiency. I went to see him, either at the offices of the "Action Française," in those days a little periodical published monthly at 42, rue du Bac, or at his house in the boulevard Edgar Quinet, or at Maurras' home in the rue de Verneuil. I asked a thousand and one questions about his political faith, and he answered them all with a persuasive ardour. I was astonished that I had not perceived before that the solution of the difficulties and dangers of our political situation was to be found in the doctrine of government by a hereditary ruler. On the other hand I was fully conscious of the difficulties confronting us. Indeed, the dangers would have proved overwhelming had it not been for the presence on our side of the genius of Charles Maurras, greatest of all leaders.

From the day I first met Maurras, when for the first time I felt the impact of his personality—the most complete, the most powerful I have ever encountered—I realized that the attainment of our goal, the restoration of the King to the throne of France, was merely a question of time. Before, I had never fully understood the meaning of the word "statesman," with all it implies in the way of action, decision, and mature judgment. Neither Drumont, Lemaître, Coppée, nor Rochefort were statesmen in this sense. Maurras, poet, dreamer, and active politician, is a statesman. In those days France did not know this. She knows it to-day. Maurras is of moderate height, slim, vigorous, with a firm, decided face in which burns the spiritual flame of fascinating, unforgettable eyes. He suffers from deafness, which is, indeed, sometimes in his way, since it prevents him from collecting the golden dust of conversation, but it has never interfered with our interviews, as I naturally speak loudly. He is like a fiery, inextinguishable furnace; he emits ten thousand times as much in light and heat as we can bring him in fuel. Everything comes from this furnace, our task is merely to report the effects produced by the causes he sets in motion.

How many times in the midst of some political, legal, journalistic, or literary difficulty have I seen Maurras enter the office with his rapid step, pause to inquire what the discussion is about, ask a question and then, in a flash, solve the problem! His remarks cut through a discussion like a thunderbolt through sand. No one ever argues with him; his lofty judgment speedily convinces. To his far-sighted, well-balanced imagination, difficulties appear as a series of obstacles which can be overcome by applying some general idea adapted to the particular instance.

When he arrived in Paris, Maurras had no money, no influence, hardly any acquaintances. For years he lived like a monk in his cell at work on an immense task. Little by little, disciples began to come to him attracted by the richness of his intelligence, by his vast common sense, and by the way in which he examines people and things, as through a magnifying glass. A rumour began to spread, which told of the existence of some man, outside and above political circles, a genuine statesman, who lived in France but was obstinately wrapped up in the unrealizable theory of restoring the Monarchy. In spite of the apparently utopian character of this idea, the people who read Maurras' articles regularly began first to understand them and then discovered how extremely possible it was, given existing conditions, to bring about what he preached.

Personally, after my first few meetings with this messenger of royal wisdom, who carried the gospel to the crowds in the market-place, I could not help thinking, "That elemental force which people used to call Nature, and which we have christened Providence, did not place such a man as Charles Maurras in our midst for nothing. Under the impulsion of this political genius the Monarchy will certainly be restored. May this take place before our country has suffered too severely!" I should mention, by the way, that one and all at the "Action Française" foresaw the coming of the Great War and that this common vision formed a further strong bond between us. Moreover, the same feeling brought us many French youths, who between 1900 and 1914 again and again felt a certain subconscious uneasiness caused by the approach of the conflict. This same spirit of impending danger led to the formation of the "Camelots du Roi," so many of whose members were later to fall dead or wounded on the field of glory.

I shall never forget my first meeting with his Royal Highness, the Duc d'Orléans. It took place in London in 1904. Though not naturally shy, I must have appeared to the Prince a stammering idiot, to such an extent was I overcome by his appearance and the revelation of his undreamt-of natural charm and intelligence. He received me with that affectionate manner, that open-handed cordiality, that smile, those phrases, which make him unique among monarchs. But even while he spoke to me, as a Frenchman who is suffering might speak to another Frenchman who understands this suffering, I kept thinking that it was *he*, the one sure remedy for his country's ills. How shocking it was that he, who could cure us, was powerless, shut up in this hotel room, while the republican wasters mortgaged and bartered away our common birthright, or threw the doors of our country wide open to receive the invader! Sobs rose in my throat and I swore to serve him and his cause with all my force, with all my soul. But how far away it seemed, how many years of exile lay before us, till that day when we could send a joyous messenger to announce, "The government which sowed death has been overthrown, the Republic has been crushed. At last France awaits her King!"

"Daudet," the Prince said to me, "now we will have some lunch." He embraced me on both cheeks. Had he said, "Jump out of the window," I should have obeyed unhesitatingly, for the Prince's whole-hearted devotion to France arouses an equally complete personal loyalty among his followers.

I am not much at ceremony. At the beginning of the meal, an abundant and excellent one by the way, for the Prince knows what to eat and drink, I kept getting mixed up between "Your Highness" and the third person singular. But Paul Bézine, who had arranged my interview with his Highness, came to my rescue and I speedily shook off this minor worry and reverted to my ordinary style of speech. By the time we left the Carlton—or Savoy, I have forgotten which—I had definitely surrendered. Nor is there any record of a "new recruit" leaving the Prince's presence without being equally enthusiastic. His Highness knows how to ravish your heart and soul. He makes you want to shout, to run about, to jump up and down, to sing . . . and, incidentally, make mincemeat of those who keep him in exile. Every time I have been so fortunate as to meet the Duc d'Orléans face to face I have felt again this vivid emotion together with the same complete spiritual satisfaction. This truly royal character possesses a magnetic quality.

After some unsuccessful negotiations with Drumont to take over his paper, "La Libre Parole," and make it definitely a royalist newspaper, Maurras called us together and announced that he was about to publish, in his magazine "L'Action Française," an appeal for sufficient capital to allow him to turn it into a daily newspaper. This, particularly when we look back on it, seems like a very daring undertaking. The conservative element in France was not yet aware of the power of the press, of how much a newspaper could do to help their campaign, while those who had offered to help us acquire the "Libre Parole" might withdraw their support. In spite of this, the idea of restoring the Monarchy proved so potent that, in a very few weeks, a sum of about two hundred thousand francs had been collected. My wife, to whom Madame de Loynes had just left one hundred thousand francs, turned this over to the cause. So we started off with a capital of some three hundred thousand francs. Our opponents, when they learned the extent of our resources, prophesied: "They will last barely six months." But they had forgotten to allow for our solidarity and the resources that Providence places in the hands of men who are determined to succeed in their enterprise.

The first number of the "Action Française" as a daily paper appeared on March 21, 1908. Our motto was the proud expression of His Highness the Duc d'Orléans, "Tout ce qui est national est nôtre."[1] The editorial offices were situated at No. 3, rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, next to the Théâtre du Vaudeville, and our printing was done at 19, rue du Croissant. Among the twelve signers of the editorial which appeared on the front page, we find the names of Charles Maurras, Henri Vaugeois, Jacques Bainville, the historian, Léon de Montesquiou, Maurice Pujo and myself. The same number contained Jules Lemaître's formal adherence to the Royalist cause. This manifesto scandalized a number of "pseudo-Republicans," among theme Judet, the editor-in-chief of the "Éclair," who in those days posed as a patriot. During the war Judet became a synonym for Judas.

It was in 1907, at the Salle Wagram, which holds about six thousand persons, that the cry of "Vive le Roi!" was heard for the first time in modern France. I was the last speaker and benefited by the fervour the other orators had aroused. One and all we had exposed the weaknesses, the sins of the plutocratic-democracy and universal suffrage. Suddenly I had the inspiration to throw to the audience this cry of hope and liberation. People went crazy, hats flew into the air, faces glowed with joy under the harsh electric light, and I thought the speakers' stand was going to be carried away by the pressure of feverish bodies enveloped in a sort of collective hallucination. And yet how many of the audience had come simply out of idle curiosity and without any royalist tendencies? It was simply a case of switching on an electric current. As Vaugeois said, when we came out, "Our whole problem is how to turn the current on all over the country, just as it was turned on to-night at the Salle Wagram." I believe, to-day more than ever before, that it would only need a single incident, one spark, to fire the political horizon. In the occurrence, all great events, even those most carefully prepared, resemble a sudden miracle.

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[1] "What touches my country touches me."

Not all our meetings were equally enthusiastic. I remember one at Toulouse where we had previously held several gatherings which had passed off very well. This time we were informed there was going to be trouble, an encouraging symptom, after all, as it was a sign that people were interested. The local Socialists, of whom there were a considerable number, had announced that they were going to break up the meeting and would not allow us to say a single word. If necessary they were prepared to shoot up the hall and the speakers. While you should always make fun of such methods of intimidation it is just as well to take certain precautions. Our friends had done so in this case. Hardly had I entered the vast hall filled with a stormy crowd when I noticed the section of the "Camelots du Roi," the militant branch of the "Action Française," drawn up against the wall and looking serious as they rested their hands on their heavy canes. Another group was in the middle of the hall. Ebelot, head of our local branch, announced in ringing tones that no interruptions of the meeting would be allowed. Hardly had I opened my mouth, when hooting and cat-calls came from all sides. I judged there were about three hundred or three hundred and fifty persons present armed with clubs, prepared to rush the speakers' platform and if possible, knock the speakers on the head. Things happened swiftly. De Bruchard, another one of our local friends, made a sign and as I continued my speech it seemed to me the walls of the hall came alive and began to move towards the center. The rioters found themselves caught in a sort of net, from which they struggled vainly to escape, shrieking "help!" and "murder!" as they did so, before anyone touched them. It was a most amusing sight. An old gentleman demanded that I should "assure the liberty of free speech." Rather a humorous remark under the circumstances. I called back I'd be pleased to turn all my authority over to him. And he was angrier than ever. In ten minutes the hall had been cleaned out. The disturbing elements had been expelled, leaving behind them their clubs and pieces of lead pipe as evidence of the rapid and decisive victory of the "Camelots du Roi."

About eleven the meeting broke up quite peacefully. We were warned, however, that our opponents were waiting for us in the street. I had my wife with me, which complicated the situation. Madame de Bruchard had also accompanied her husband. Both ladies are brave and were merely amused, not realizing the danger they were in. Surrounded by our cohorts, we started for the hotel through the howling mob, which followed us to the very door. Madame de Bruchard was struck by a cane, and several times it seemed that a riot was inevitable. Fortunately, nothing of the sort occurred and we were able to get back safe and sound. Outside the windows the crowd that had wanted to lynch us, called out, "Assassins! Assassins!" and then dispersed singing the "Internationale" very much off the key. The battle hymn of the "Camelots du Roi" answered them. I then devoured something to eat with much satisfaction, declaring to my wife that I would never let her attend another so-called "dangerous" meeting. This threat, however, she has heard too often and it fails to produce the least effect.

I referred just now to the "Camelots du Roi." They came into being a few months after the "Action Française" began to appear as a daily, and consisted at first of a group of young men belonging to the middle classes who were enthusiastic adherents of the cause and admirers of the doctrines of Maurras. The first body of recruits formed a sort of snowball whose size increased as time went on, until the organization included the great majority of young Frenchmen, students, clerks, mechanics, skilled workmen and even ordinary labourers. I cannot say that we were surprised to see this movement start. Indeed we had rather counted on it, it seemed to us to be inevitable. But it was far larger, far swifter in its growth than we had expected. Moreover it started in Paris, which was a good sign, rather than in one of the provinces where there have always been a certain number of Royalists. Thus the A. F. began to be popular among young men between eighteen and twenty-five who at first volunteered to act as newsboys, selling the paper on the streets (this led to their being known as the "Camelots du Roi": literally "the newsboys of the King"). Later, equipped and disciplined, they became a nationwide Nationalist organization devoted to the interests of order and their country, and the man on whom both depend, namely, the King of France.

From 1909 to 1914, many silly or disgraceful stories were told about the *corps d'élite* formed by the members of the "Camelots du Roi." Several months before the War, they became still more prominent by the way in which they defended the law in favor of three years' military service, and the manner in which they defeated the gangs of anti-patriots, and by their magnificent processions in honour of Jeanne d'Arc. Then came the four years' struggle. Fighting in the front rank, the "Camelots du Roi" made an unforgettable record for themselves by their heroism. This record is inscribed in their Roll of Honour and bears the names of thousands who were killed or desperately wounded on the field of glory. Their sacrifice is a guarantee of the inevitable and speedy success of our cause. These heroic children knew to what an extent the government was to blame for our lack of proper military preparation. Yet this knowledge did not prevent their rushing into battle with the same ardour they had felt in the six years' struggle they had waged against the domestic foe. Whoever dares slander the Camelots slanders their sacrifice as well. Let the enemies of the "Action Française" or the Royalist and Nationalist cause beware. Though more than a tenth of their number fell, slain by the Hun, the ranks of the Camelots have been refilled, and their enthusiasm has increased their force a hundredfold. To-day they are both more numerous and more determined to achieve their purpose than they were before the war.

The activities of the "Camelots du Roi," this extra-police force as one of their leaders, Maurice Pujo, called them, were various. They frequently led to fines and imprisonment, as when they consisted in smashing the statues of the partisans of Dreyfus which the Republic had put up as trophies of the Civil War. On the other hand, an episode which took place early in 1910, not long after the Camelots had come into existence, increased their popularity among the masses. There had been heavy floods all over France, but especially around Paris. The Seine, generally so peaceful as it flows between its tree-bordered *quais,* raged like a lion. In a very short time the suburbs, especially toward Charenton and Villeneuve-Saint-Georges where the Marne flows into the Seine, were invaded by muddy waters which rose rapidly. The poor folk occupying huts or little houses along the shores were forced to leave. Others, caught by the flood, found themselves in danger and cut off from safety. The river police and the ordinary police were unable to cope with the situation, while tramps and vagabonds took advantage of it to burglarize the empty houses. At this juncture the Camelots showed their mettle. Acting rapidly under the orders of their leaders, they hired boats and rowed about distributing food and drink to the workmen and their families caught in the districts of Bercy and Draveil, which had become like prehistoric lake villages. They spent money freely, and the more they spent the more came in. It is a generally recognized fact that the Royalists in France are extremely generous. If they have money they give it, if they have none they spend their energy; they give of their strength, physical or spiritual, as the case may demand. The working classes were quick to recognize and appreciate the efforts of the Camelots. I remember the smiling faces of the latter as they returned from their expeditions, the tales they told of their experiences, and the touching letters sent them by the men and women whom they had succoured. Once the flood was over, the Camelots set about rebuilding a number of the little houses the waters had destroyed. A part of the town of Villeneuve-le-Roi was erected in this way. In France the public appreciates work well done, as in this instance. The results proved the discipline and the self-sacrificing spirit of this group of young men.

I have often thought that Georges Clemenceau must have been greatly astonished by the creation and subsequent activity of the "Camelots du Roi." In 1907, while on a trip through the Vendée, he made a speech "to the last of the 'Chouans.' "[1] Three years after this speech, which immensely amused some eighty thousand "Chouans," more liberal in their ideas than Clemenceau himself, there appeared in Paris a band of youthful Royalists and since then new bands are enrolling daily. One of the chiefs of these Camelots was Maxime del Sarte. He was also one of the first victims of the Clemenceau Cabinet, or rather of the Jew, Schrameck, later senator, who was then in charge of the State Penitentiaries. Having been beaten by warders acting on Schrameck's orders, Maxime came back in a characteristic manner, and the "Action Française" gave an account of what had taken place. Clemenceau sent for both Schrameck and del Sarte and an interview took place. The scene must have been a memorable one. Years elapsed. Clemenceau saved France, as we all know. Maxime, who had lost an arm in the war, wrote him, went to see him again, and the former enemies, the young Royalist and the last of the Republicans of '70, became friends. Here we have a fine symbol of the *"Union Sacrée."*

I will not undertake to write the history of our paper and our political activities from 1908 to August, 1914. The files of the "Action Française" are there for all who wish to read. Nor can I mention a hundredth part of what people have done for us. Our task is not yet completed. It would be premature and inadvisable to make a full list of what each has contributed. I can declare, however, that all have remained united in one common cause. None has been a "slacker." When confronted by serious obstacles, we have recognized that the task of restoring the King to his throne is an important undertaking and one involving a certain number of risks. On the other hand, we have discovered that the Royalist spirit is not as dead in France as people said it was. It exists, and has only been asleep. Otherwise the enthusiasm of our young adherents, who twenty-four hours before had been Republicans or entirely indifferent to politics, would be inexplicable. One of them told me he had never known any pleasure comparable to that of having been thrown into a filthy prison cell one winter's night. On that occasion he had understood the fervour of the early Christians suffering for their Faith. As a matter of fact, he himself was an ardent Christian. How could Youth resist our appeal? A clear, definite doctrine, expressed by a Charles Maurras, is like a light set up in the midst of the mind, illuminating every corner. Then, too, there is the fact that this doctrine is linked to the history of our country and is personified by a great living personality, a fine brain, a truly royal figure, the descendant of our ancient rulers, Philippe, Duc d'Orléans.

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[1] Royalist insurgents in the Loire Valley during the Revolution. (Translator's note.)

In the number of the "Action Française" dated Sunday, July 2, 1911, appears a brief mention of the fact that Germany has sent the gun-boat "Panther" to Agadir. Bainville, writing on this subject, says, "Those who consider such a state of things as acceptable or even bearable lack foresight. To those of us who can see a little way into the future, war appears inevitable, if the Republican government remains in power." It became our principal duty to show our countrymen, heedless or blind as they were, the extent of the immediate danger. We held a meeting, as we always do on such occasions, and decided what course to pursue, what general instructions we would send out to our branches and individual members. The moment we had made these decisions we set about to execute them. In fact it was in July, 1911, that we began to "clear decks for action." We were aware of the power and unity of Germany. We were aware, also, of the relations existing between certain French politicians, of whom Caillaux was the most important, and the German government. All of us had a premonition of the stealthy way in which our finances, industries and commerce were being undermined by the enemy. The essential thing was to reveal concrete facts, to locate exactly the subterranean gallery, its direction and objective. Here we have the origin of the campaign known as "L'Avant-Guerre." I acted as the spokesman but every one in our organization played his part. The "Camelots du Roi," scattered about in a large number of trades and professions, followed what was going on about them with patriotic zeal. They brought me important documents and were remarkably useful. I take this new opportunity to express my thanks to them, one and all. Little by little their example proved contagious, and even certain government officials followed their example. In the beginning, the latter were afraid of being betrayed and took all sorts of precautions; later on, they discovered that I was discreet and that they could trust me. Indeed I made a point, once I had used a document, of destroying my correspondent's letter and forgetting his name. In this connection, I discovered how little loyalty government employees feel towards the political system of which they are part. My early articles must have amused the section of the German General Staff whose duty it was to introduce spies into France. They must have said to themselves: "Is that all he knows? What a lot he still has to learn!" Little by little, however, I extended the field of my discoveries, I struck deeper below the surface and, by the middle of 1912, like a scientist bending over his slides or an anatomist working in his laboratory, I became aware with horror of the imminence of the danger. In a short time I was convinced we were face to face with a preconcerted plan, the same plan which I have described in the preface to my book entitled "L'Avant-Guerre." I felt it necessary my fellow citizens should be warned. The principal newspapers were entirely silent as regards our revelations, in spite of the fact that some of the latter were most sensational. This was partly due to the risk of law suits brought against the papers by German contractors or financial interests, partly by the fear of wounding and unmasking certain influential men in power, especially Joseph Caillaux.

Between 1911 and 1914 the importance of Caillaux had been steadily growing in parliamentary circles. The Radicals swore by him. The Socialists beamed on him and Jaurès had formulated an entire program featuring an alliance with the banker in return for a tax on incomes. Caillaux was even popular with the Liberals, who admitted his strength, while Briand watched bitterly the rise of an active, ambitious rival who lacked patriotism and common sense but knew how to control his followers and fill government posts with his henchmen. Caillaux loves intrigue, and knows well how to bully and hustle his fellow deputies into line. Apparently neither Clemenceau nor Poincaré suspected in the least his secret plans. Naturally the Conservatives hailed Caillaux as a financial Cæsar whom all lovers of law and order should support. Meanwhile we kept on fighting him, unmoved by the rumours that the man who was shortly to be tried for treason, was planning to have us prosecuted for the same offense. But we fought "Caillautism" even more than the man himself.

What is "Caillautism"? What was it between 1911 and 1914? What form did it take later? Caillautism is an absurd theory according to which the War might have been avoided if we had consented to a friendly diplomatic, financial and commercial understanding with Germany after the Agadir incident. As a matter of fact, such an "understanding" had already been reached both in certain financial groups and between certain branches of government. But it was precisely to this "understanding" we owed the sudden declaration of war, for it is part of the Hun's character to demand always more than you are willing to give, no matter how much that may be. The Hun is insatiable. Give him a chair, he will take your house, then your wife with it, and, finally, the skin off your back. The only thing he recognizes is the Law of the Strongest.

When we wrote things of this nature in the "Action Française," the Socialists declared we were stirring up war. Poor fools! They, meanwhile, were listening to the "comrades" from across the Rhine who promised them (see the visit of Müller to the French Socialist group in the Chambre of Deputies on July 31, 1914) never to vote for a war budget! The blindness of Jaurès as regards this matter was something extraordinary. I fancy that it was due to the pro-German philosophical training which he, like the rest of our generation, had received, and which had done him a particular amount of harm. It is curious that this Latin demagogue should have been so soaked in the heaviest, most confused system of metaphysics to be found anywhere! Never, however, in our newspapers or elsewhere, did we advise his suppression—he had the supreme joy of dying for his ideas, as Maurras wrote the day after his violent demise—but we always attacked violently his dreadful mistake as regards Germany and her real purposes. Men who talk abundantly and well come at last to imagine that their speeches will bring about the events they hope for. They forget that humanitarian conventions between rival or hostile nations have never led to anything except an exchange of cannon-balls.

It was under these conditions that I wrote "L'Avant-Guerre." I was obsessed by the thought of the peril which threatened my country. One incident of this time that I recall was a conversation I had with a young officer, the son of a well-known general, about the farms along the frontier tenanted by Germans and the danger they presented for our front-line troops. Following the line of these farms on the map we felt ourselves face to face with an implacable system of methodical occupation. We noted that several of the farms were in direct telephonic communication with one another. To whom could I report these discoveries? At the Ministry of War the "Service de Renseignements" had been discontinued. As regards the police I had good reasons for mistrusting both the Secret Police and the Central Bureau filled with the adherents of Caillaux. The only means left me were the newspaper and the book-stall.

It must have been early in January, 1913, on a chilly, snowy day that I took my manuscript to George Valois. The office of his publishing firm, the "Nouvelle Librairie Nationale," was at 11, rue de Médecis. Although not rich in cash the firm possessed treasures in the way of initiative, intelligence, and energy. Consequently its future was assured. I said to Valois: "My friend, here's the bundle. There's material in it for possible law suits involving several hundred thousand francs' worth of damages. I do not need to tell you that Germans and pro-Germans are powerful in France."

"Bah," answered Valois lighting a little cigarette, "perhaps the rascals won't stir, but if they do we'll see what's to be done. We'll appeal to the public. What I'm afraid of is a total silence. The big papers won't say a word. I must think up some other form of advertising."

Though I am used to the unconcerned attitude of this publisher, who is unique in his profession, I felt it necessary to insist. I pointed out all the risks he was taking (including the possible collapse of his publishing house) due to the sub-title of my volume "Articles and Essays on the German-Jewish Spy System in France since the Dreyfus Case." Valois replied that Providence knew its business. If his house was destined to collapse why it would do so, if not it wouldn't. Since war was about to break out we were absolutely obliged to warn those interested in National Defense, and try to avoid their being taken by surprise on the day of the mobilization. "After all, that's what I'm here for . . ." he said finally, as though he were saying: "Have a drink." The next moment he had begun to figure out how many printed pages the manuscript would make, jotting down figures in his little note-book. I watched him as he sat there with his head on one side—his firm brow, his black mustache, his rapid glance—and I realized he was the only man capable of publishing such a work.

The book was issued on March 5, 1913. That same day the publisher sent around Paris an automobile delivery-wagon with big panels on each side announcing its publication. The police seized the wagon and took it to the pound. Nevertheless the effect had been achieved. Several thousand copies were sold in a couple of days. The press maintained the strict silence we had expected, with the astonishing exception of a few lines of approval in the "Temps." I have always felt that these were due to personal intervention on the part of the editor-in-chief, Adrien Hébrard, an old patriotic Republican who had congratulated me shortly before on my general campaign, telling me at the same time that I must expect no support from anywhere. As a matter of fact, "L'Avant-Guerre" is a dry work, full of documents, intended rather for those interested in the problem of National Defense than for the idle reader. Neither the general nor the parliamentary public care for anything that points out a general danger and urges action. We received no legal summons. The word had evidently been passed about among the Huns and pro-Huns to keep quiet and wait for what was going to happen.

However, in some way or other, at the time of the declaration of war, and especially after the victory of the Marne, people began to talk about a volume called "L'Avant-Guerre" which seventeen months before had announced events that had happened since. A sudden storm broke around the offices of the "Nouvelle Librairie Nationale" and bundles of copies were taken off at a time. It became a sort of legend; people declared not only had I predicted the attack by way of Belgium and the valley of the Oise, which was perfectly true, but also the slightest details of the Battle of the Marne, which was not true at all. From behind the lines the tales spread to the trenches. Every day I received letters from soldiers asking for my book or congratulating me on having written it. Confirmation of what I had said regarding the German farms along the Woevre and near the frontier came in thick and fast. The publishers were at a loss how to fill the orders. About fifty thousand copies were snapped up between the end of 1914 and the beginning of 1916. The Huns themselves helped, as their newspapers informed their readers about that dreadful work, "Der Vorkrieg," and its wretched author, "son of the celebrated novelist, Alphonse Daudet, and head of the Royalist paper, 'Action Française.' " At this period there also began the ignominious attacks of Almeyreda's paper, "Le Bonnet Rouge," and the Minister of the Interior, Malvy, who forbade my delivering lectures on the book, while at the same time he authorized and favored revolutionary propaganda.

This is a short summary of the dramatic career of a book I could never have written without the help of the newspaper and the Camelots and which I could never have published without Valois. People tell me it proved useful during the mobilization; it would have proved still more so had the State consulted it earlier.

I could add to these memoirs a host of other anecdotes, dealing with the development of the paper and the Royalist movement. They would have given my readers a better idea of the obstacles we encountered and overcame. But I wish to keep this account as simple as the events it describes. Moreover the War has changed our perspective. Many things which seemed important once upon a time seem less so nowadays. I hope I have made it clear to those who read these pages that the laws, principles, and rules governing political events are always the same everywhere, and that a country such as ours can live and prosper only under an hereditary monarch. This is neither a dream nor an utopian vision nor a personal fancy. It was the Kings of France who made France, and if she is to survive, in spite of the Republic, it is because of the excellence and strength of the national fibre. Yet no material is so solid that it can resist human folly, if the latter tear away at it for a long enough period, and I do not believe that the deadly experiment which began with the Declaration of the Rights of Man can keep on more than twenty years longer without doing us irredeemable harm.

Now that I have become a sincere Christian, after shuffling off the indifference of those materialistic and evolutionistic surroundings that in my youth called themselves "scientific circles," I believe in the intercession of our dead to hasten the return of the King. It is not possible that so many brave youths, barely entering upon man's estate, and beholding life from its truest, noblest angle, should have died without securing the reward their bravery deserved. Morning and night, when I close my eyes, I seem to hear about me an immense prayer rising from our French cemeteries, forcing its way upward through the earth still scarred with shells and trenches, rising through the air still vibrating with the cannon's roar. I see this man and that, vital still, seeking and yearning for his country's happiness. I hear all their voices beseeching the Almighty to bring about that event which filled their minds and hearts as they lay a-dying. I think the unshakable faith of those who survive is based on the insistent prayers of those who have gone before.

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